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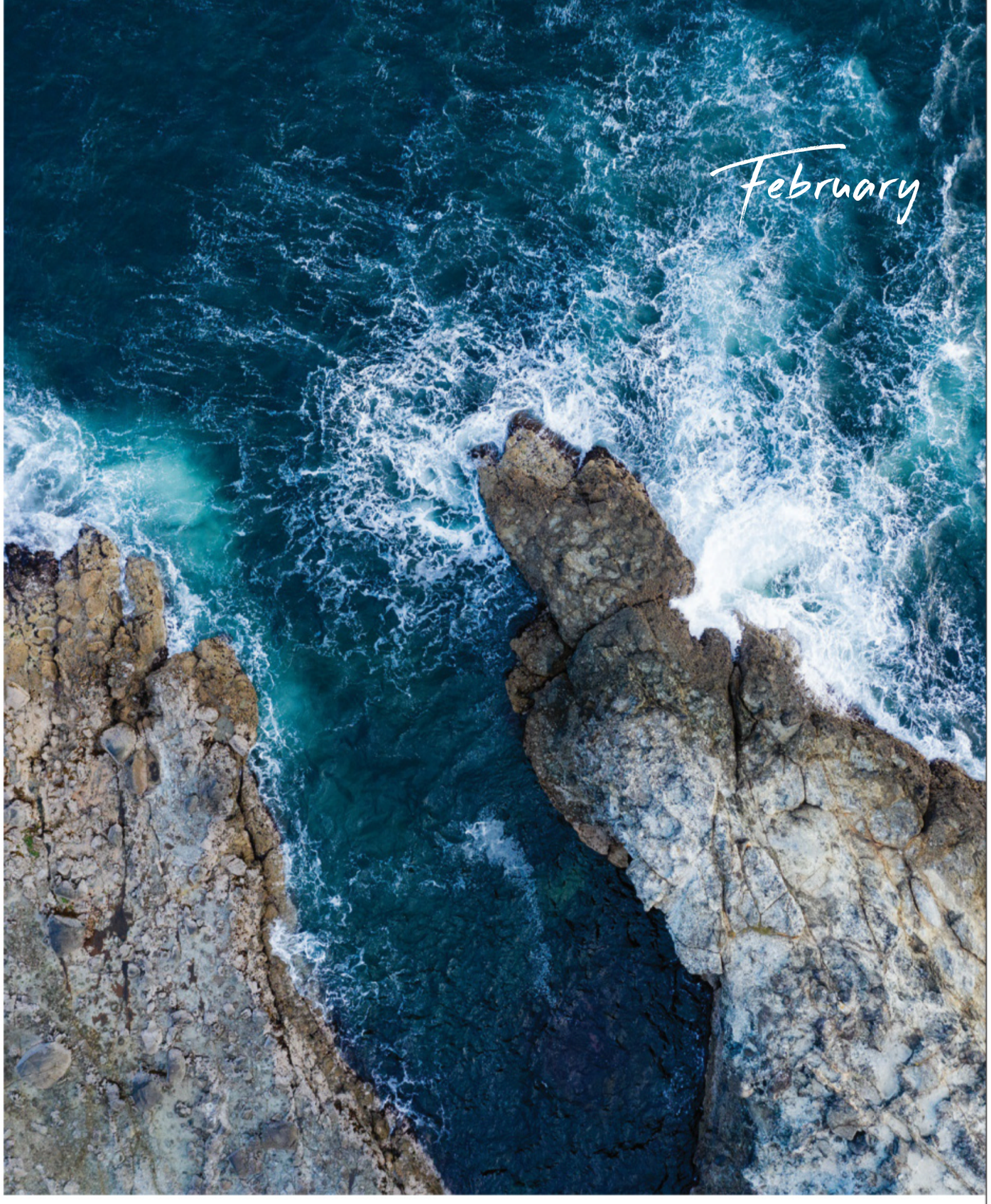


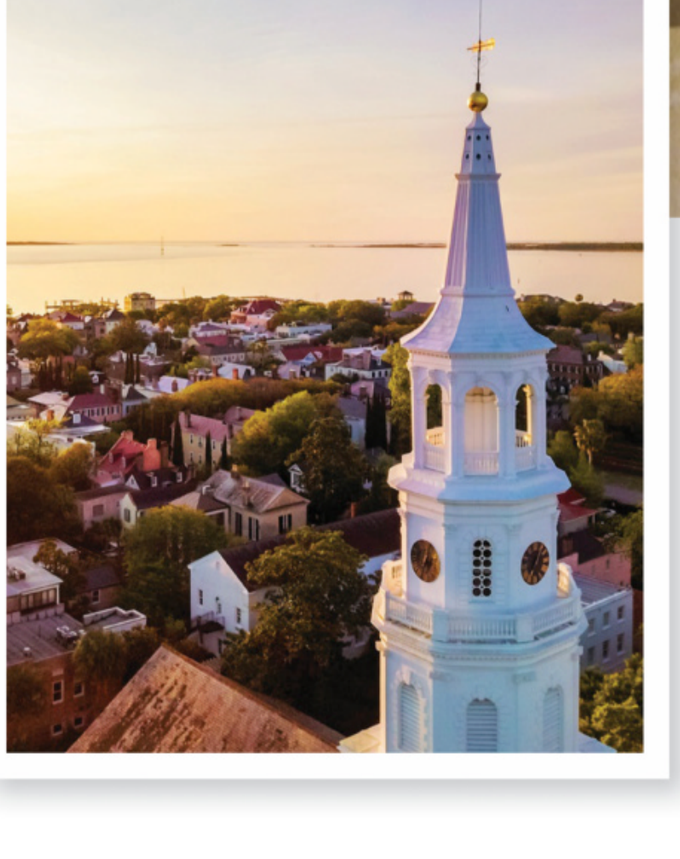
▲ *The rocks below Whaler's Lookout, on Great Barrier Island in New Zealand (page 30).*

Features

ON THE COVER The Atlantic Ocean, as seen from Cabbage Beach, in the Bahamas (page 76). Photograph by Melissa Alcena.

KIERAN E. SCOTT

CHARLESTON
South Carolina



With its balmy sea breezes and warmhearted locals, the Charleston area is an unmistakably idyllic place. Plus, it is surrounded by pristine barrier islands and five unique beach towns—**Folly Beach, Isle of Palms, Kiawah Island, Seabrook Island,** and **Sullivan's Island**—each with its own distinctive personality. Just the change of scenery you're looking for. Your seaside getaway awaits.

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6

1. Danielle Pointdujour

GUEST EDITOR (P. 53)

Pointdujour, an editor for *Ebony* and *Essence* who was born and raised in Brooklyn, took the lead in showcasing the Black travel movement as guest editor of this month's Intelligent Traveler section. "Squeezing such a massive story into nine pages was a challenge," Pointdujour says. "The package not only shines a light on some of the movement's best and brightest; it includes people I personally know, admire, and respect in the travel game."

2. Michael W. Twitty

HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY (P. 94)

Maryland-based Twitty, has roots in South Carolina dating back to the 18th century. So he was keen to travel to the Lowcountry last October to explore how Gullah-Geechee food has told the people's story over time. Twitty says: "Though some say the culture is on its last legs, on the ground you clearly see that it is very much alive and adapting to a changing world."

3. Saki Knafo

A DROP IN THE OCEAN (P. 82)

"I arrived in the Spice Islands expecting dazzling coral and not much else," says the Brooklyn-based writer, who took a cruise around this remote part of Indonesia in November 2019. "I didn't envision the volcanic lake full of stingless jellyfish, and I knew nothing about the brutal history of the spice trade until I was deep into the trip."

4. Nina Caplan and William Craig Moyes

HIGH-WATER MARK (P. 66)

This writer-and-photographer duo—a married couple who split their time between England and France—explored the waterways of Burgundy on a luxury canal cruise with Belmond. "Usually, getting from one place to another is the least interesting part of a trip," Caplan says. "Here, it was the highlight. As we watched forests change to vineyards and villages give way to the city of Dijon, we got to know the region and its history intimately."

5. Melissa Alcena

BEYOND THE SEA (P. 76)

Alcena hails from the Bahamas and is a portrait and documentary photographer. Her work is on display at the Current—the art studio and gallery at the Baha Mar resort, which she shot for this issue. "I enjoyed being able to photograph and exchange stories with artists I respect," she says. "We're all Bahamian, so there's a sense of pride that comes with documenting each other's work."

6. Leslie Hsu Oh

ALL IN GOOD TIME (P. 36)

"Glacier Bay National Park is known as a living lesson in resilience because of how rapidly nature recovered from the fastest glacial retreat in history," says Oh, a writer and photographer based in California near Lake Tahoe who has deep connections to the Indigenous community in Alaska. "I discovered that resilience is something I have in common with the park's natural landscape—and its people."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF DANIELLE POINTDUJOUR; COURTESY OF SAKI KNAFO; COURTESY OF MELISSA ALCENA; COURTESY OF LESLIE HSU OH; COURTESY OF WILLIAM MOYES; NOAH FECKS/COURTESY OF MICHAEL TWITTY

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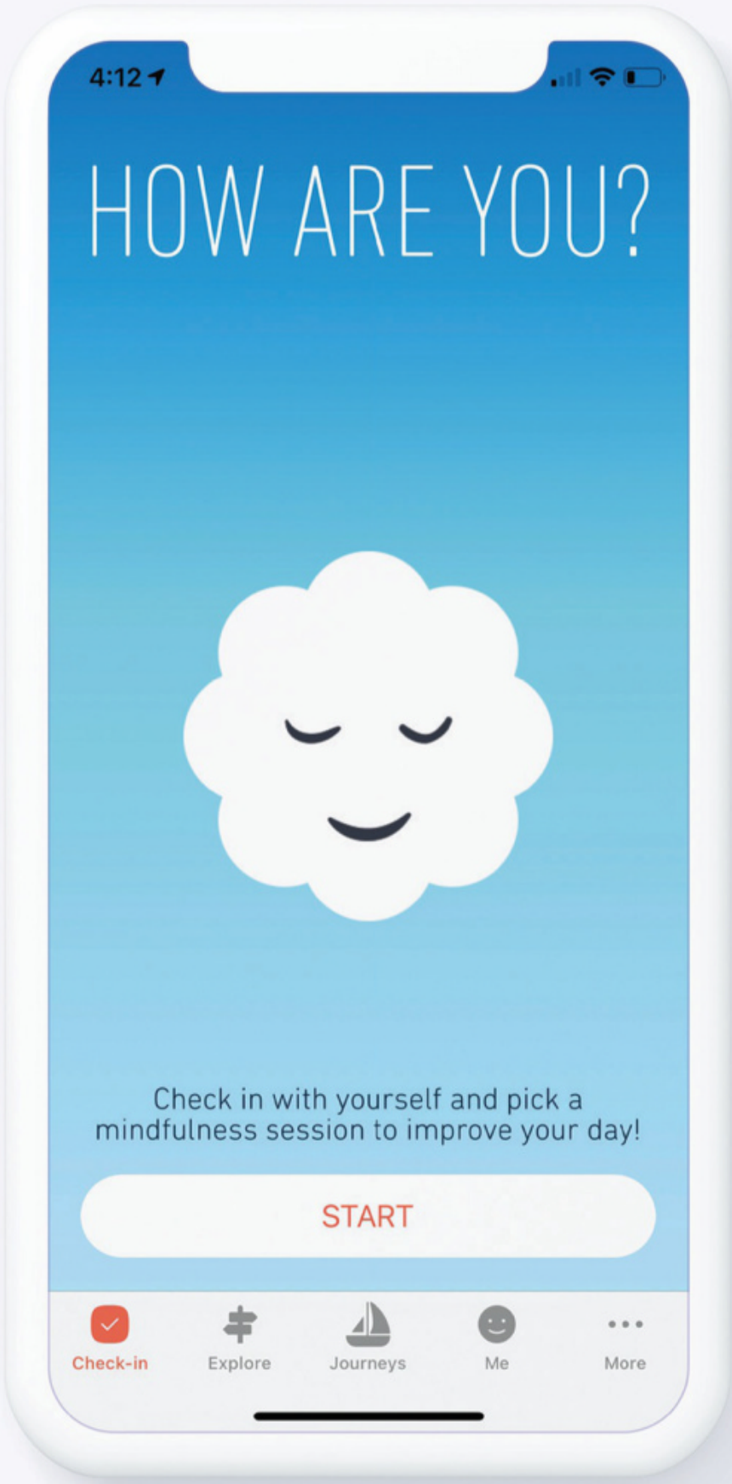

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my life

LETTER *from the Editor*

MY MOTHER always says my smile gets wider when I'm on a ship, whether it be big or small. She should know: we've taken countless cruises together, one of our last being in 2016, on Regent's *Seven Seas Explorer*. The luxury liner ferried us from Barcelona to Sardinia and Monaco, keeping us fed and entertained every inch of the way. During an onboard cooking class, I learned how to make the perfect vinaigrette—a recipe I still whip up at home to this day.

Our most recent sailing was a smaller-scale affair. We took a two-hour spin with Classic Harbor Line on a schooner right here in Manhattan, sipping wine a safe distance from the other passengers and, for the first time in a long time, watching a jazz band perform. After living in Manhattan for nearly two decades, I actually got up close to the Statue of Liberty. The year 2020 proved to be full of surprises.

I ended that fall day with a renewed appreciation for the simple pleasures of traveling on water. My shoulders are always an inch or two lower when I've been by the sea, or a river or lake—any body of water, really. That's why this issue provides ideas for future coastal vacations—something we are all probably craving right now. It also offers insight into the cultural makeup of these destinations: how water shapes and becomes a part of the legacy of a place, informing everything from food and wine to art and architecture.

This issue also coincides with Black History Month here in the United States. Please read our Intelligent Traveler section, where guest editor Danielle Pointdujour, along with numerous Black contributors, takes a deep dive into the history of the Black travel movement, where it came from and where it is going—which is hopefully forward, into a more inclusive era.

Jacqui sets off from New York City's Chelsea Piers aboard the America 2.0*—a replica of the schooner that won the first America's Cup in 1851.*

COURTESY OF JACQUELINE GIFFORD

FROM MY TRAVELS

With school in session, the Giffords have stayed close to home this winter, choosing to support businesses and hotels right here in New York City. These included the **Bronx Zoo** *(bronxzoo.com),* which was transformed into an outdoor wonderland during its holiday light display, and the aforementioned **Classic Harbor Line** *(sail-nyc.com),* which changes its programming with the seasons but is still going strong. My husband and I continue to meet friends at the **Mark** *(themarkhotel.com; doubles from $695; entrées $24–$63),* voted by our readers as the best city hotel in the continental U.S., for drinks and snacks. A flag with T+L's World's Best logo is proudly flown above the entrance, and there is now heated, covered seating on the sidewalk—an innovation that's sure to remain, post-pandemic. The reopening of the **Baccarat Hotel** *(baccarathotels.com; doubles from $795),* with its glittering façade, subterranean pool, and intimate La Mer spa, gave my neighborhood of midtown another happy boost. Still, as the cold sets in and we stay in our apartment a bit more, I've been trying to make my domestic routine, well, a little homier—lighting up a Sea Island candle from **Creed** *(creedboutique.com),* drinking an **Argiano Brunello di Montalcino** *(argiano.net)* to celebrate decorating our Christmas tree, and slathering on organic **French Royal Jelly** *(frenchroyaljelly.com)* to combat dryness. Whatever works these days, whatever works.

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Jacqui.Gifford@travelandleisure.com

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CHRISTINA HOLMES

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Hello Sunshine

The best antidote to the winter blues? A stay at one of these exclusive, impeccably styled hotels in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Jamaica, and St. Bart's. **BY JONATHAN THOMPSON**

The infinity pool at Eclipse, the luxurious new addition to Jamaica's Half Moon resort.

ERIC STEIN/COURTESY OF HALF MOON

THE PRIVATE ISLAND RETREAT

Lovango Resort & Beach Club is the first new hotel built in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 30 years—and it was worth the wait. Tucked away on a lush island a 10-minute boat ride from St. John, it's a fully sustainable hideout, powered solely by the sun and trade winds. In December, the property—which will be rolled out in phases—added a lavish three-room villa with a cliff-top infinity pool. Also open is a full-service beach club with an oceanfront seafood restaurant; later this year, a cluster of cottages and glamping tents will debut. Excursions include private yacht charters and world-class snorkeling off the palm-fringed private beach. *lovangovi.com; villas from $995.*

▲ *From top: Lester's Bar, at Eclipse; sunset views of St. Bart's from a Bungalow suite at Le Carl Gustaf.*

THE LEGEND CONTINUED

This spring, all eyes will be on Jamaica, thanks to the long-awaited release of the Bond film *No Time to Die*. But 007 isn't the only famous name with a new offering on the island. The storied Half Moon resort—which appeared in the 1973 film *Live and Let Die*—has also unveiled a blockbuster sequel: its even higher-end offshoot, **Eclipse**. Located in a secluded corner of the same 400-acre estate, the 57-room-and-suite property pays tribute to the island's bohemian glamour, with pops of turquoise and kelly green and colorful lobby murals by the late Jamaican artist Michael Lester. Other draws include a private swimming cove, a bar serving molecular cocktails (shaken, stirred, and smoking with dry ice), and a sumptuous spa with overwater treatment rooms. *halfmoon.com; doubles from $725.*

THE STYLISH SANCTUARY

The latest gem on St. Bart's is a reimagined version of one of the island's most iconic stays: the Hotel Carl Gustaf, built in 1991. After years of being closed, the property was scooped up by the French Barrière group; today, the reborn **Le Carl Gustaf** comprises just 21 suites and villas, each with its own terrace and plunge pool overlooking the yacht-filled harbor of Gustavia. Interiors by Gilles & Boissier feature wicker furniture, botanical prints, and braided jute rugs, while the Parisian-inspired spa uses products from French skin-care line Biologique Recherche. At Fouquet's, celebrated chef Pierre Gagnaire has created a French-Caribbean menu—try the mahi-mahi with lime, tomato, and minted cucumbers while taking in sunset views from the breezy veranda. *hotelsbarriere.com; doubles from $1,800.*

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF THE LOVANGO; ERIC STEIN/COURTESY OF HALF MOON; FABRICE RAMBERT/COURTESY OF LE CARL GUSTAF

Lovango Cay, in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Saint Barth towel by Hermès.

Towel Off

Artist Quentin Monge grew up on the French Riviera, where he honed his skills drawing simple figures in the sand. He channeled those early days when Hermès invited him to design a beach towel that captures the allure of another sunny Francophone destination: St. Bart's. With vivid colors and geometric forms depicting palm trees and a vintage airplane, it's a statement-making piece for the seaside or the home. *hermes.com; $580.*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JULIE LIMONT/COURTESY OF LE FAHAM; MARIE ETCHEGOYEN/COURTESY OF LE FAHAM; COURTESY OF HERMÈS

Le Faham's chef and co-owner, Kelly Rangama.

A Moveable Feast

At the Parisian restaurant Le Faham, haute cuisine mingles with the distinctive flavors of Réunion Island. **BY CAITLIN RAUX GUNTHER**

"THE CULINARY TRADITIONS of France's overseas territories are part of French cuisine—and people tend to forget that," says Kelly Rangama, the chef and co-owner of Le Faham, in Paris's Batignolles neighborhood. Last year, the restaurant—which she founded with her husband, pâtissier Jérôme Devreese—became the world's first Michelin-star recipient to celebrate the cooking of Réunion, the Indian Ocean island where Rangama was raised. "My father loved to cook," she says, "so Réunionnais flavors are very much in my blood." Here's how she's bringing both worlds to every bite.

ISLAND HEAT

"Réunion cuisine has Indian and Chinese influences. Because of this, Parisians assume that our food will be too strong or too hot. But we carefully calibrate the spices so they don't overwhelm the senses."

FLAVOR FUSION

"We're always incorporating Réunion ingredients. For instance, during mushroom season, we'll combine porcini with essential oils from the rose geranium plant, which adds a light, aromatic quality.

SPECIAL DELIVERY

"We import turmeric and *massalé,* as well as Bourbon vanilla. And once a year we get a shipment of the extremely rare faham orchid after which our restaurant is named. It adds caramel notes when churned into ice cream or infused in rum-based cocktails." *lefaham.com; prix fixe from $79.*

Aged beef with ravioli filled with spicy lemon rougail, *a Réunionnais condiment made from tomatoes and chili peppers.*

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Into the Mystic

With a host of new attractions, the remote Scandinavian archipelago of the Faeroe Islands is ready for its next wave. **BY JEANINE BARONE**

▲ *From left: The Múlafossur waterfall on Vágar Island; smoked fish on rye bread at Fiskastykkið café.*

THERE'S A MONUMENTAL beauty to the Faeroes, a necklace of 18 volcanic isles in the North Atlantic between Norway, Scotland, and Iceland. Jagged cliffs drop into fjords, waterfalls spray toward the sky on gusty winds, and thick fog envelops stark moorlands (the Faeroese language has 40 words for the meteorological phenomenon). It's tempting to get lost amid these landscapes while imagining yourself a shepherd or a Viking settler. But with the recent debuts of smart hotels, gourmet restaurants, and charming cafés—plus a maze of roads, bridges, and tunnels connecting the islands—it's worth seeing what modernity has to offer, too. This road-trip itinerary winds around three of the archipelago's largest islands, combining sights that are new, ancient, and otherworldly.

DAY 1

Home to the main airport, Vágar Island has six villages, the smallest of which, Gásadalur, has only 10 full-time residents. You're here to see Múlafossur, a magnificent waterfall that drops 500 feet into the North Atlantic. From there, drive 20 minutes south to colorful Sandavágur, a village wedged between a frigid bay and the western slope of Trollkonufinger Mountain. After snapping photos of the town's red-roofed church, built during World War I, swing by **Fiskastykkið** *(fiskastykkid.fo; entrées $16–$19),* a café that serves Nordic specialties like hot-smoked-salmon salad with braised rhubarb. Spend the night in a traditional grass-roofed cottage at **View to Drangarnar, Tindholm end Mykines** *(airbnb.com; house from $96),* in the village of Bøur.

DAY 2

A 45-minute drive (part of which winds through a tunnel) brings you to the capital, Tórshavn, located on the island of Streymoy. Here, you'll find brightly painted houses and atmospheric pubs alongside sod-roofed dwellings and 19th-century churches. Browse traditional yet on-trend Faeroese knitwear at **Ullvøruhúsið** *(ullvoruhusid.com),* then stop by the **National Gallery of the Faeroe Islands** *(art.fo)* to admire seascapes by renowned homegrown painter Sámal Joensen-Mikines. Enjoy a slice of wild-berry cheesecake in the

FROM LEFT; COMPASS + TWINE; JANA JONHARDSDÓTTIR. OPPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF HAVGRÍM SEASIDE HOTEL 1948; BRICE BRAASTAD-EPISODE II/COURTESY OF DOLCE & GABBANA. ILLUSTRATION BY MAY PARSEY

▲ *The view from the Commodore Suite at the Havgrím Seaside Hotel.*

sunny backyard of the **Paname Café** *(paname.fo).* Or splurge on a 17-course tasting menu at **Koks** *(koks.fo; tasting menus from $310),* a Michelin two-starred restaurant set inside a 280-year-old farmhouse on Lake Leynar. The restaurant uses regional practices of salting, smoking, and fermenting to concoct creative plates like steamed deep-sea crab with pickled-leek jam. After a day of sightseeing, retire at the **Havgrím Seaside Hotel** *(hotelhavgrim.fo; doubles from $425),* a former private residence recently transformed into an elegant coastal escape, with 14 rooms done up in shades of powder blue and cream.

DAY 3

Last month saw the unveiling of a new tunnel—complete with a light installation by Faeroese artist Tróndur Patursson—connecting the islands of Streymoy and Eysturoy. Once you've arrived on Eysturoy, head north toward Gjógv, a quaint village named for the sea-filled gorge that runs through it. Order a glass of wine at **Gjáarkaffi**, a stone-walled café with bright red trim and picnic seating. Afterward, check in to your simple, homey room at **Gjáargarður Guesthouse** *(gjaargardur.fo; doubles from $165),* where there's live music and Faeroese folk dancing every Wednesday evening.

Vines in Vogue

Fashion houses are partnering with European winemakers to bottle the glamour of a seaside getaway. **BY HANNAH WALHOUT**

The wines of the Mediterranean islands are characterized by vibrant minerality and a touch of sea salt. Sip a lively Vermentino from Corsica, France, or a juicy Biancolella from Ischia, Italy, and you'll be mentally whisked away to a breezy terrace or sandy beach. Given the wines' transportive powers, it's no wonder high-end fashion houses are buying in to the daydream. In 2019, Chanel acquired Domaine de l'Île, an 84-acre winery on the French island of Porquerolles that was founded by Belgian adventurer François-Joseph Fournier in 1911. The new label just released the 2020 vintage of its refreshing Provence-style rosé, plus a bright white made from 100 percent Rolle grapes. And last summer, Dolce & Gabbana teamed up with Sicily's Donnafugata estate for a limited-run rosé produced with grapes grown on the northern slope of Mount Etna. It's floral on the nose with notes of citrus—and the label is inspired by the hand-painted designs seen on the island's traditional donkey carts.

▲ *Chanel's Domaine de l'Île vineyard, in Porquerolles, France. Left: Dolce & Gabbana's Rosa rosé.*

The Comeback Kid

Though it's a package-tour favorite, Corfu has long been overlooked by more discerning travelers. But thanks to the arrival of thoughtfully designed hotels, the island is getting another look. **BY PAUL BRADY**

With its hilly countryside and strategic location near the confluence of the Adriatic and Ionian seas, Corfu is rich in both history and natural beauty. A powerful city-state in ancient times, the island was later ruled by the Venetians and the British. These days, its capital, called Corfu Town, is a popular stop for cruise ships. But the island has never had quite the cachet—or the luxury accommodations—of islands like Mykonos or Santorini.

"Corfu has amazing beaches, stunning landscapes, and a gorgeous city center," says Christos Stergiou, a member of T+L's A-List of top travel advisors who specializes in Greece. "But the hotel options were always lacking."

That's set to change this year. Leading the way is the **Angsana Corfu** *(angsana.com; doubles from $266),* the first-ever European property from the Asia-based wellness-focused brand. Located near the fishing town of Benitses, the hotel has views of the sea from many of its 159 rooms and 37 villas. Unique selling points include a sumptuous spa with outdoor treatment pavilions and a fine-dining restaurant from Corfiote-Italian chef Ettore Botrini, of the Michelin-starred Athens restaurant Botrini's.

The **Olivar Suites** *(olivarsuites.gr; rates not available at press time)* is another property to watch. "It's built in one of the longest-standing olive groves of Corfu, which, at three hundred years old, is considered a historical monument," Stergiou says. Slated to open in May, the hotel comprises 120 stand-alone cabanas with private terraces and plunge pools, steps from a sandy beach in Messonghi, on the eastern coast.

Meanwhile, the luxe **Grecotel Corfu Imperial** *(corfuimperial.com; doubles from $456),* on a private peninsula less than 30 minutes from Corfu Town, will reopen in May after an upgrade to all the guest rooms and suites, which will feature chic white linen furnishings and mirrored accents—plus panoramic sea views. Later this summer, the adults-only **Domes Miramare, a Luxury Collection Resort, Corfu** *(marriott.com; doubles from $237)* will get a sister property, **Domes of Corfu** *(domes ofcorfu.com; doubles from $142),* surrounded by the cypress and olive trees of the island's western shore. This beachfront gem will deliver on the same anything-you-want service, but will also cater to families, with a kids' club and an outdoor street-food setup.

▲ *From left: The village of Kalami has secluded beaches and swimming coves; the lobby at Domes of Corfu.*

FROM LEFT: LAURYN ISHAK; COURTESY OF DOMES RESORTS. ILLUSTRATION BY MAY PARSEY

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Explore From the Water

HILTON HEAD ISLAND

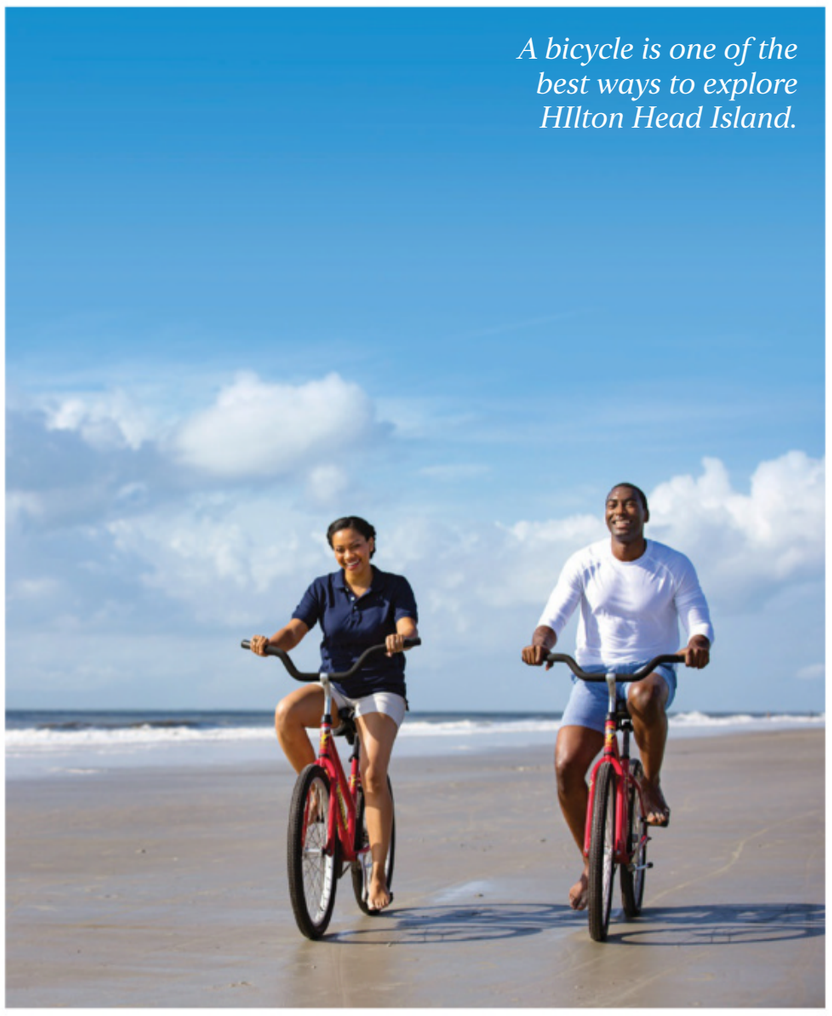
A sustainable outlook and stylish coastal living make Hilton Head Island a gorgeous destination for fresh sea breezes and Lowcountry cuisine.

Blessed with year-round sunshine, mild weather, and pristine natural beauty, Hilton Head Island is one of the country's most charming beach towns. Getting out on the water is a way of life and locals proudly harvest some of the tastiest seafood to hit your plate.

Escape to Serenity

With nonstop flights from 27 cities on 9 airlines into the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport (SAV), Hilton Head Island is an easy escape that feels tucked away in nature—and purposely so. It was one of the first resort communities to work environmental preservation into its master plan. Thanks to this progressive vision, much of the serene natural beauty remains untouched and precious wildlife, like the loggerhead sea turtle, still has a place here.

Wild and farmed oysters harvested locally are a delicious taste of the sea.



A bicycle is one of the best ways to explore HIlton Head Island.

Boat, Bike, or Walk in Nature

Among Hilton Head Island's 12 miles of peaceful beaches, more than 60 miles of leisure pathways, and 23 world-class golf courses, there are ample ways to relax or explore. For private or small group excursions, Outside Hilton Head offers kayaking, fishing, paddle boarding, and biking adventures. The Coastal Discovery Museum, situated on the historic, 68-acre Honey Horn property, features land tours of the forts of Port Royal and nature cruises to spot dolphins, manatees, and a rich variety of birds. The island is also one of the most bicycle-friendly communities in the U.S.

Indulge in Fresh Food

Outdoor dining is one of the best ways to enjoy the Lowcountry lifestyle. At Hudson's Seafood House on the Docks, one of the most beloved establishments for local seafood, three licensed shrimp trawlers dock right at the restaurant for real boat-to-table dining. The restaurant also harvests the region's famed blue crabs, and has its own oyster farm.

For more trip ideas and to start planning, visit HiltonHeadIsland.org.

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Palm Heights founder Gabriella Khalil, center, with designers Courtney Applebaum, left, and Sarita Posada.

A Grand Passion

Designer uniforms. Museum-worthy furniture. A shop with indie magazines and vintage clothes. Think of Palm Heights, on Grand Cayman, as the alterna-resort. **BY DIANA TSUI**

"WHEN MOST PEOPLE TRAVEL, they want either a relaxing beach holiday or a cultural city-like experience," says interior designer Gabriella Khalil, founder and creative director of Palm Heights, Grand Cayman's only boutique hotel, which opened in December 2019. "We offer both." Under her expert eye, the 52-room property on Seven Mile Beach has emerged as the Caribbean's new "it" spot, with a slew of high-profile collaborators.

"We invited friends and friends of friends to work on programming and the mix of perspectives made for something special," Khalil says. Fashion designer Emily Adams Bode created the staff's colorful linen uniforms, while interior designers Sarita Posada and Courtney Applebaum filled the property with vintage décor such as Mario Bellini sofas and an Ettore Sottsass rug. Khalil also tapped Caymanian artist John Reno Jackson, whose vibrant abstract paintings appear in select suites.

The dining and wellness offerings are equally enticing: Bella Hadid's trainer, Joe Holder, advised on the exercise programming—from track-and-field-style workouts to barefoot body-weight classes. And Mexican-American chef Gerardo Gonzalez, formerly of New York hot spot Lalito, conceived the menu, which leans heavily on the flavors (curry leaf, jicama, tamarind) of Mexico and the West Indies.

With travel still up in the air, the hotel has pivoted to digital events—including cooking demos by the likes of Panamanian chef Aris Latham—on its streaming platform *(palmheights.tv)*. Khalil is looking forward to a future when we can all join her in person. Until then, following along is the next best thing. *palmheights.com; doubles from $680.*

FROM LEFT: BROOKE SHANESY/COURTESY OF PALM HEIGHTS; KRIS DAVIED/COURTESY OF BOMBA CURLS (2). OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CLEMENT PASCAL/COURTESY OF PALM HEIGHTS; BROOKE SHANESY/COURTESY OF PALM HEIGHTS; BROOKE SHANESY/COURTESY OF PALM HEIGHTS; CLEMENT PASCAL/COURTESY OF PALM HEIGHTS

▲ *Clockwise from above: The dining room at Tillie's, at the Palm Heights hotel on Grand Cayman; the hotel's Coconut Club; a staffer in his Emily Adams Bode–designed uniform; shrimp skewers at Tillie's.*

Beauty with a Tropical Twist

A start-up brand is bringing Dominican hair-care secrets to the masses. **BY JOHANNA FERREIRA**

Despite having immigrated to Miami from the Dominican Republic at the age of eight, Afro-Latina entrepreneur Lulu Cordero always felt a strong connection to her roots. So when she started losing her hair, her mother suggested experimenting with traditional island remedies. "Dominican culture is obsessed with hair," Cordero says. "I grew up listening to the women in my neighborhood trading natural beauty recipes." Before long, she was taking trips back to her birthplace of Villa Mella, a town in Santo Domingo Norte, to learn more about these homegrown rituals—and in September 2019, after a decade of trial and error in her kitchen, she launched **Bomba Curls** *(bombacurls.com)*. The beauty line's top product, Dominican Forbidden Oil, uses ingredients like castor and black cumin seed oils, rosemary, and coffee to promote growth, definition, and shine. Says Cordero: "Curls and kinks aren't just beautiful—they're the bomb!"

▼ *Bomba Curls founder Lulu Cordero and her Dominican Forbidden Oil.*

Deep Dive

An aquatic watch isn't just an accessory: it's an attitude. These rugged timepieces will make any traveler feel like the world's most daring underwater explorer—with or without taking the plunge. **BY SIOBHAN REID**

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENDAN JAMES

SET STYLING BY MARIANA VERA

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What’s in your wallet?

1. Omega and marine research foundation Nekton partnered on this special-edition diver, crafted from highly resistant Grade 5 titanium. *Omega Seamaster Diver 300M Nekton Edition, $6,150; omega.com.*

2. A woven jacquard strap gives this ticker a sporty feel. *Tudor Black Bay 58 in navy blue, $3,375; tudor.com.*

3. Named after British explorer James Cook, Rado's newest aquatic watch stands out with its crimson case, bezel, and strap. *Rado Captain Cook in bronze and burgundy, $2,600; rado.com.*

4. This sturdy, high-performing timepiece has two straps—one rubber, the other Velcro—and a power reserve of 72 hours. *Panerai Submersible Azzurro, $9,800; panerai.com.*

5. Don't be fooled by the elegant leather strap and dazzling bronze case—Longines's latest is waterproof at up to 1,000 feet. *Longines Legend diver watch in bronze, $3,000; longines.com.*

6. The newest addition to Tag Heuer's Aquaracer series, this model comes with all the bells and whistles, including a scratchproof, anti-reflective sapphire-crystal face *Tag Heuer Aquaracer in khaki green, $1,650; tagheuer.com.*

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Experiences

TRAVELERS' TALES, FROM NEAR AND FAR

Edited and by LILA HARRON BATTIS and SARAH BRUNING

SMALL WONDER

Amid the natural splendor of New Zealand's Great Barrier Island, **ELLEN FALCONER** discovers a community of entrepreneurs weaving sustainability into everything they do.

THE FIRST THING I noticed about Great Barrier Island was all that green. This diminutive stretch of forested land—just 110 square miles in size—popped against the azure waters of Hauraki Gulf, which stretches from Great Barrier to New Zealand's North Island. As our plane descended, distinct features gradually revealed themselves: rocky pinnacles reaching skyward, rugged slivers of beach with windswept foliage, and, lastly, a few clusters of low-lying buildings.

Fellow Kiwis who'd visited told me the setting was magical. Yet I was still caught off guard by the island's almost primeval beauty. Though roughly 1,000 people call Great Barrier home, there's little development, as two-thirds of the land is protected by conservation law. Te Motu o Aotea, as it's known in the Maori language (or, informally, Aotea), doesn't have water mains. And in the absence of an electrical grid, it relies largely on solar power.

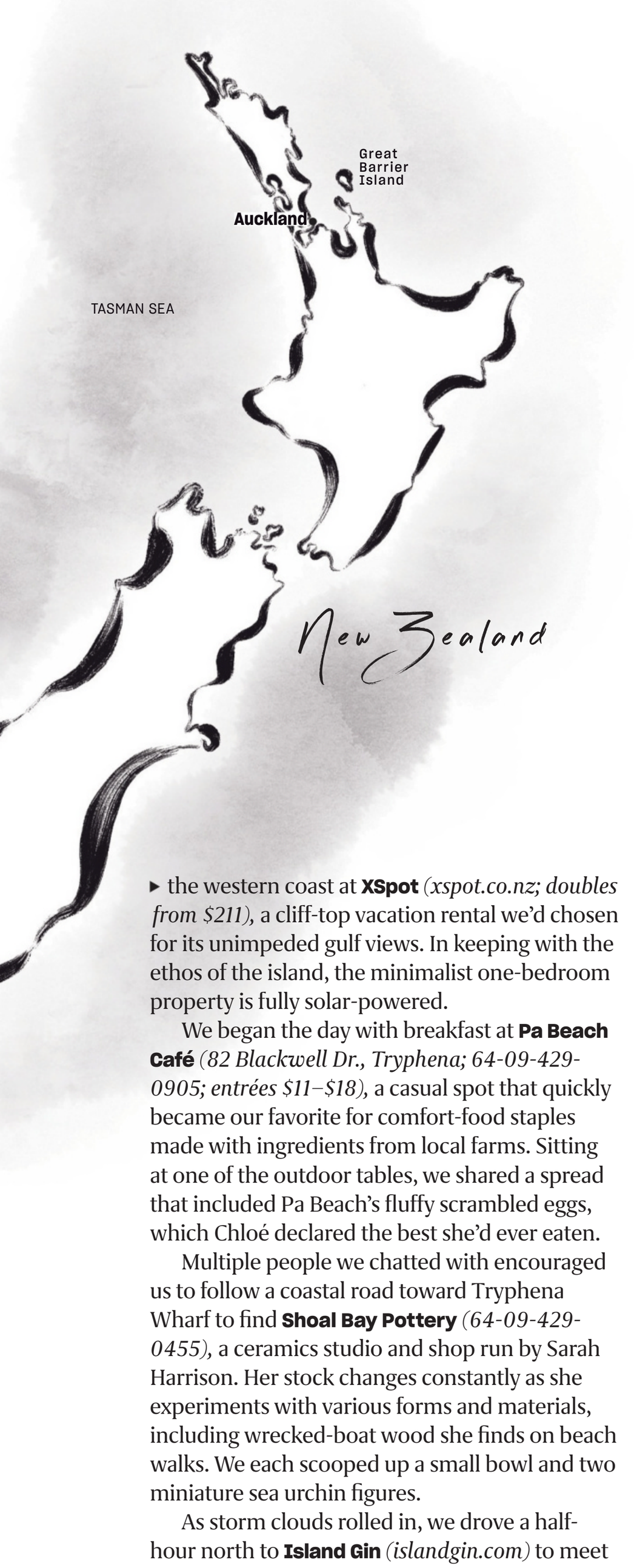
Here, sustainability is less of a buzzword and more of a necessity. Residents consider themselves guardians of the land and feel a deep responsibility to protect it. Their work is paying off. One case in point: in 2017, Aotea was named a Dark Sky Sanctuary—a certification that has only been given to 13 remote areas with minimal light pollution.

Even newcomers who have moved here from other parts of the country to adopt a slower lifestyle have built businesses designed to support Aotea's ecosystem. Recently, a growing number of travelers have begun to recognize its appeal as an easy, off-the-grid getaway—just a 40-minute flight from Auckland. Travel within New Zealand had normalized by last August, so in November, my friend Chloé and I decided to hop over for a four-day trip to rekindle our appreciation for the great outdoors.

I woke early on our first morning to hear an ebullient warble: a tui, a bird with a distinctive white pom-pom ruff, was feasting on the nectar of harakeke flax flowers outside the bedroom window. Chloé and I were staying on ▶

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KIERAN E. SCOTT

XSpot, a solar-powered vacation rental overlooking New Zealand's Hauraki Gulf.



▸ the western coast at **XSpot** *(xspot.co.nz; doubles from $211),* a cliff-top vacation rental we'd chosen for its unimpeded gulf views. In keeping with the ethos of the island, the minimalist one-bedroom property is fully solar-powered.

We began the day with breakfast at **Pa Beach Café** *(82 Blackwell Dr., Tryphena; 64-09-429-0905; entrées $11–$18),* a casual spot that quickly became our favorite for comfort-food staples made with ingredients from local farms. Sitting at one of the outdoor tables, we shared a spread that included Pa Beach's fluffy scrambled eggs, which Chloé declared the best she'd ever eaten.

Multiple people we chatted with encouraged us to follow a coastal road toward Tryphena Wharf to find **Shoal Bay Pottery** *(64-09-429-0455),* a ceramics studio and shop run by Sarah Harrison. Her stock changes constantly as she experiments with various forms and materials, including wrecked-boat wood she finds on beach walks. We each scooped up a small bowl and two miniature sea urchin figures.

As storm clouds rolled in, we drove a half-hour north to **Island Gin** *(islandgin.com)* to meet owner Andi Ross for a tasting and tour, available by appointment. The former creative director, who had been vacationing on Great Barrier with her family for nearly two decades, decided to permanently settle here in 2017, leaving behind the urban pleasures of Melbourne for the chance to start her distillery. With raindrops echoing on the tin roof, Ross poured samples of three gin flavors: original; the high-proof navy strength; and a tangelo-laced special edition. To anchor the spirits with a deep sense of place, she sources manuka honey from local beekeepers and combines it with native botanicals, including lemon verbena and coriander. When I noticed the unusual texture of her bottles, she explained that it was a nod to the *kina,* one of New Zealand's endemic sea urchins.

Late that afternoon, we met up with Benny Bellerby of adventure operator **Star Treks** *(star treks.kiwi),* who led us on a 45-minute walk to Kaitoke Hot Springs, a set of geothermal pools hidden in the middle of Aotea. Flanked by wetlands on one side and dense bush on the other, they are said to have been favored by early Maori for their restorative properties. We arrived at the temperate main spring just as the light started to fade. Chloé and I quickly slipped off our shoes, eager to get in and wade through the stream-connected ponds.

As evening turned to full-on night, Chloé and I uncorked a Pinot Noir and relaxed in the balmy shallows. While Chloé had one last dip in the warmest pool, I wrapped up in a towel and helped myself to a minty tisane Bellerby made for us from kawakawa leaves and manuka honey. As I tipped my head back to down the last sip, I spotted Mars twinkling through the trees.

The next morning we headed 30 minutes north from XSpot to check out **Motubikes** *(motubikes.co.nz),* an electric-motorbike rental company near the airport on the eastern coast. We found owner Seagar Clarkson poring over some kind of manual. As it turned out, the former naval officer was studying to join the Rural Fire Brigade because "everyone helps out with a few bits and pieces."

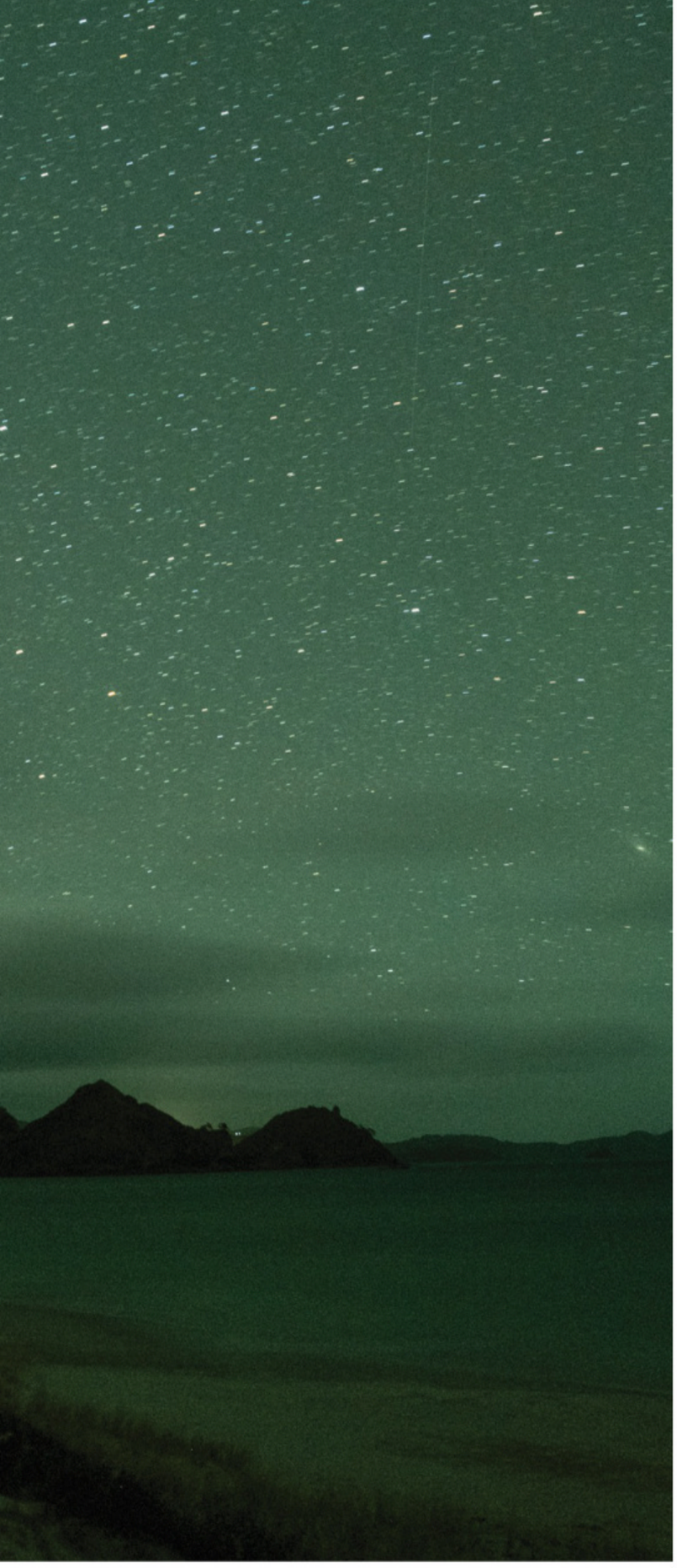
Normally, visitors rent Clarkson's single-seater bikes to zip around the island. I don't have a driver's license, but Chloé, who does, jumped on one just to give it a whirl. After a couple of steady laps around the gnarled trunk of the pohutukawa tree in Clarkson's yard, she proved proficient enough for a quick test run on the road. She returned 15 minutes later with a cheerful *toot! toot!* and a grin on her face.

The following morning, we returned to the same area to visit **Aotea Brewing** *(aoteabrewing.co.nz).* Sarah Bowman and Caleb Clarke's microbrewery—marked only by a vintage truck—features several upcycled shipping containers. It's currently open to the public only on Saturdays, but Bowman pulled tasters for us to try anyway. As I sipped the Solar Charged American Pale Ale, she explained, "It's a celebration of New Zealand hops, which have a fruity, aromatic punch."

▲ *Medlands Beach, one of the best spots for stargazing on Great Barrier Island's eastern shore.*

▸ *A walkway leads to the geothermal pools of Kaitoke Hot Springs.*

ILLUSTRATION BY MAY PARSEY



◂ *Island Gin's spirits are infused with local herbs and manuka honey.*

▴ *Sarah Harrison of Shoal Bay Pottery often incorporates found objects from the beach in her pieces.*

She went on to explain that many of the brewery's manufacturing components are onto their second or third life, including the fermentation tanks, some of which came from a nearby dairy farm. "It's about taking full responsibility for everything on site—where it comes from, how you appreciate it while it's here, and where it goes," she explained.

That night we arrived at Medlands Beach for a stargazing tour with Deborah Kilgallon of **Good Heavens** *(goodheavens.co.nz)*. The clouds had been patchy all day, but we lucked out and spotted Jupiter and four of its moons through a telescope before the sky turned overcast. Kilgallon said that in better weather we'd have been able to see the constellation Scorpius, which in Maori tradition is the fishhook the hero Maui used to bring the North Island up from the ocean.

Before heading to the airport the next day, Chloé and I stopped back at Medlands. We'd hoped to squeeze in one last swim, but the ocean was still too wild after a storm that had passed through two days earlier.

As we walked back to the car barefoot, I started thinking of an ad we'd heard on the local radio station, urging listeners to take everything with us and leave nothing but footprints. It reminded me of all the people we'd met and their inspiring commitment to this special place.

Chloe and I looked back at the gusty dunes one last time and realized our own footprints had all but disappeared.

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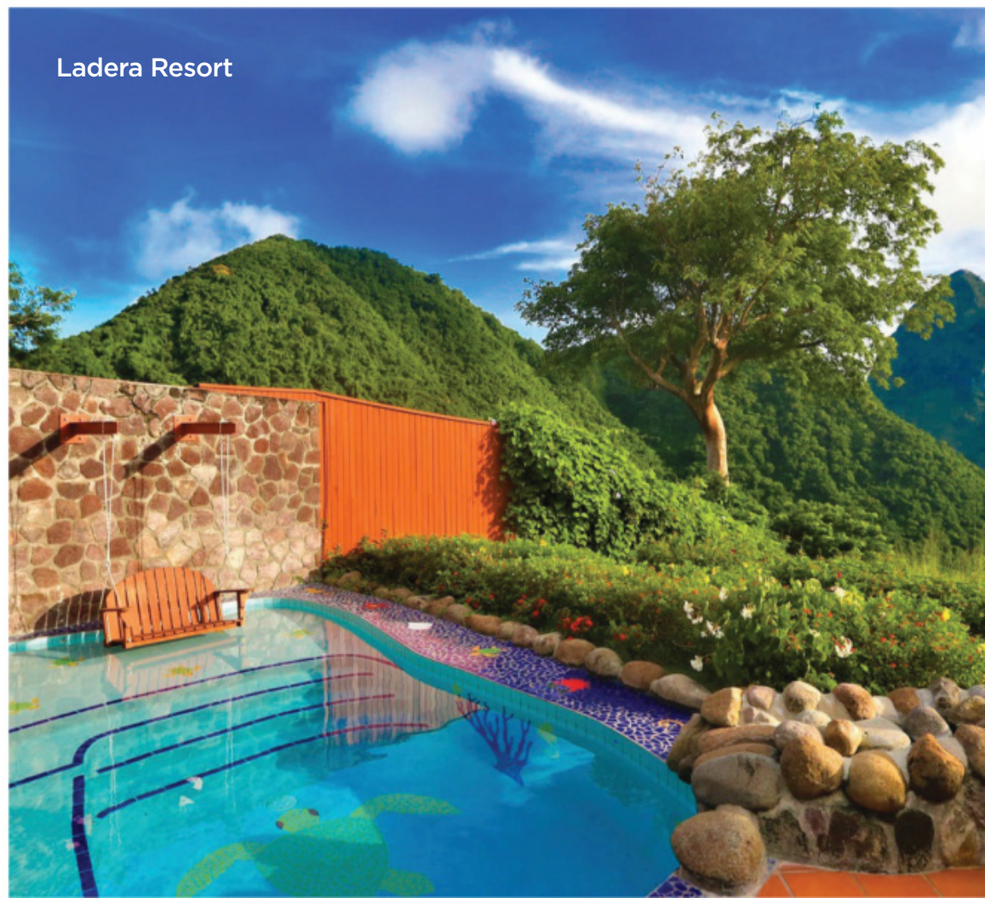

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serenityatcoconutbay.com; 877.252.0304

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ansechastanet.com; 800.223.1108
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Sailing toward Johns Hopkins Glacier, in Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve.

ALL IN GOOD TIME

On a long-awaited family trip to Alaska's Glacier Bay National Park, one writer finds an elemental landscape that holds powerful lessons in loss and rebuilding.

BY LESLIE HSU OH

PEERING THROUGH my camera lens, a finger on the shutter release, I held my breath as the sun ignited a turquoise sheen on a wall of ice. My husband, children, and I had taken a high-speed catamaran to the face of Johns Hopkins Glacier, which towers 250 feet above the waterline. Black-legged kittiwakes soared above, waiting, like the rest of us, for ice to crack and fracture into the ocean.

Our three-year-old, Logan, sat on my husband's shoulders, clutching his hair for balance whenever the catamaran swayed. Six-year-old Riley wrapped herself around my leg. Fourteen-year-old Kyra and 11-year-old Ethan had already disappeared onto the upper deck, each armed with their own camera. With just two days in Alaska's Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve, I didn't have time to kayak among the icebergs or dive to the depths of the ocean to see the marine snow drifting down. I only had enough time to fulfill a fraction of my mother's dying wish.

My mother believed that life was short and we had to seize the day. With cameras around our necks, we'd raft down rivers or leap onto the backs of horses. A photographer and artist, she taught me that art could say the things that we are afraid to say, that it could deliver a message beyond the life of its creator. She would ask me, "What story are you trying to tell?"

We had visited nearly all the national parks in the United States and Canada except for those in Alaska by the time my mother died from the same disease that had claimed my 18-year-old brother a year earlier. She had asked my father to take me to Alaska after her death, but I refused, angry that he grieved by distancing himself from all evidence of our tragedy—including me. While he moved on to a new wife and son, I looked for answers in the natural world, and in the Indigenous communities most intimately familiar with these places.

Growing up, we'd never stayed in one place long, so the closest I'd come to a sense of belonging was on those trips to the national parks. When I became a mother, I brought my kids to these lands, hoping to anchor them to something that endured beyond the brevity of human life.

WHEN WE ARRIVED in the park, I teared up as I pressed the Glacier Bay cancellation stamp onto my national parks passport. Such a simple act, yet I felt like I had run marathon after marathon for 25 years just to collect this marking. My husband and I had lived in Anchorage for seven years and explored Denali, Katmai, Kenai Fjords, Gates of the Arctic, and Wrangell-St. Elias. But Glacier Bay remained out of reach—too remote and difficult to visit while juggling our responsibilities raising four children.

This trip had only become possible when we were invited to the nearby town of Yakutat for a Tlingit memorial potlatch, a ceremony hosted a year after someone dies, where rituals are performed to remove grief. We were there to celebrate my late mentor, Elaine Chewshaa Abraham. Elaine was Naa Tláa (clan mother) of the Yéil Naa (Raven Moeity), K'ineix Kwáan (people of the Copper River Clan) from the Tsisk'w Hit (Owl House), whose ancestors have lived in this part of Alaska for generations.

Elaine's family would be carrying out her request to adopt me and the kids at this potlatch. There would be a naming ceremony, and though I didn't know it yet, we would be given Tlingit names of landmarks in and around Glacier Bay, binding us all to this place and its people.

Among ecologists and the Huna Tlingit people who have made their home here for centuries, Glacier Bay is known as a living lesson

▲ *The author and her family explore Bartlett Cove, on the southeastern shore of Glacier Bay.*

LESLIE HSU OH. OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF NPS PHOTO/GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE

Johns Hopkins, an active tidewater glacier within the park. Opposite, from top: A brittle star in the intertidal zone; shells along the shoreline.

in resilience. In 1750, the Grand Pacific Glacier advanced so swiftly it wiped out entire Huna Tlingit settlements, replacing their valley of grass with a river of ice—then retreating in equally dramatic fashion. We weren't able to grasp the scale of the destruction and recovery until we had sailed nearly 65 miles up the bay, in the path of the 20-mile-wide glacier's withdrawal.

Over the past century, scientists have studied how this place rebuilds itself. They've documented the transformation of plant life and streams, which were initially full of sediment and midge larvae but are now home to significant salmon runs flowing through cottonwood forests. "The wilderness is very efficient at reestablishing itself in the wake of a catastrophic event," explained park ranger Rebecca Miller, our guide for the boat tour, "and Glacier Bay is a prime example of the phenomenon." Around Johns Hopkins Glacier, the land was rocky and bare. But on the southern fringes of the bay, where the ice receded decades ago, life had edged its way back. At Glacier Bay Lodge, we picked beach strawberries and slept beneath a canopy of old-growth Sitka spruce forest.

Our first night in Glacier Bay, my husband and I had walked along the shore of Bartlett Cove while our kids dipped their feet in crystal-clear waves. Kyra nearly stepped on a mottled starfish that had been stranded by the tides. She picked it up gently and returned it to the ocean. As I watched her, I thought of all the adopted mothers I'd been lucky to have, like Elaine Abraham, who had loved me like her own and, even after her death, helped me to anchor my children and myself to her ancestral lands.

Riley found a white, cone-shaped mushroom with upturned scales and gills that stained her fingers black. Ethan chased after Logan with the molt of a Dungeness crab. I chuckled remembering how I'd once sworn I did not want to have kids or get married—a daughter who couldn't imagine building a life without her mother, or maybe just someone who wanted to protect herself from the possibility of more loss.

My husband warned us to watch our steps. Scattered up and down the rocky shore were

LESLIE HSU OH. OPPOSITE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF NPS PHOTO/GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE; ILLUSTRATION BY MAY PARSEY
MATTHEW HRANEK/ART + COMMERCE. I

dozens of nearly invisible moon jellyfish, some drifting in the current, others glistening on rocks, translucent on their edges and transparent in the center, reflecting the colors of the setting sun.

BACK ON THE BOAT, Ranger Miller continued her narration as we waited for a piece of Johns Hopkins to break off into the sea. "What happens when nature decides to wipe things clean? A cold, rocky, wet, barren landscape. But somehow, life finds a way." Suddenly, a cannon-shot sound startled us. A teasing trickle of ice collapsed into the sea, followed by a modest chunk of the glacier's terminus. It wasn't the most spectacular calve I had ever seen, but Logan and Riley, who had never witnessed a calving before, were ecstatic. My kids would leave Glacier Bay the next day with Junior Ranger badges pinned to their chests, showing they learned something from the forces of nature in this place.

I left the park wishing I had more time to digest what my mother wanted me to take from this journey. I was 46, a few years shy of my mother's age when she died, and part of me felt as though there was a reason I hadn't made the trip until now. Perhaps only after becoming a mother myself, after years spent learning that things don't always happen the way we want them to, could I relate to the creatures who choose to adapt to life here. Beneath a calving glacier, a place of biological catastrophe, a sudden drop in temperature or increase in freshwater runoff can be enough to determine survival. Only now, at this stage in my life, could I understand that I'm not the only one struggling with change.

After returning home, I read everything I could on the discoveries scientists have made in Glacier Bay. For a long time, it was believed that nature rebuilt sequentially: moss colonized glacial sediment, then fireweed moved in, then the enriched soil gave rise to alder and cottonwood, spruce and hemlock. But in 2017, a biologist studying this park found that plant succession isn't an orderly process. One glacier-scraped plot of land had eight-foot willows. Others hadn't changed at all over a hundred years. Nature doesn't heal as tidily as we thought. Just as all of us don't heal from grief in the same way. What matters is resilience, finding some way, however messy, to deal with catastrophic events that advance and retreat unpredictably through our lives. What matters is how we adapt.

One day, long after I am gone, I hope my children will return to Glacier Bay. I hope they'll walk intertidal zones hand in hand with someone who loves them as much as I do, rescue a stranded creature, photograph a jellyfish, find a glacier or passage that shares their Tlingit name, and feel like they have finally come home.

HOW TO EXPLORE GLACIER BAY

Both **Alaska Air** *(alaskaair.com)* and **Alaska Seaplanes** *(flyalaskaseaplanes.com)* offer flights from Juneau to the Glacier Bay airstrip in Gustavus. **Glacier Bay Lodge** *(visitglacierbay.com; doubles from $250)* houses the park visitors' center and serves as the departure point for the seasonal **Glacier Bay Day Tour**, an eight-hour ranger-narrated expedition into the bay.

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Young surfers strolling on Máncora Beach, in Peru.

RIDING THE WAVE

On the fringes of Peru's northern coast, the burgeoning surfer's paradise of Máncora courts travelers with pristine beaches and a laid-back, bohemian vibe. **MARTA TUCCI** catches a break.

STANDING ON THE TARMAC of Talara, a no-frills regional airport in northwestern Peru that sees just eight flights per day, I began to think I had made a mistake. Though I was destined for Máncora, a coastal town in the Piura province, I found myself surrounded by nothing but desert.

"You're in the right place!" a fellow passenger called. I turned to find a Matthew McConaughey doppelgänger with salty locks and a giddy grin. After chatting for 15 minutes, I learned he visited Máncora regularly and often encountered confused first-timers. Headed in the same direction, he offered me a ride and helped load my tattered longboard onto his dusty 4 x 4 Suzuki. "Everyone has the same reaction," he said with a chuckle, making zero effort to avoid the road's frequent potholes. "Give it a few days, and you won't want to leave."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARTA TUCCI

▲ *Clockwise from left: An open-air living room at the boutique hotel Kichic; Carlos Valdiviezo, an instructor at Surf Point; tuna tartare at La Sirena d'Juan.*

After a bumpy hour-long drive, the road dipped down, revealing a row of bright bougainvillea-covered villas, and the ocean began to peek out from behind the dunes. When I laid eyes on Máncora's legendary north swell, I could understand why surfers and artists began to settle in this isolated slice of paradise in the 1970s.

Over the past few years, the combination of near-perfect sunshine and reliable waves has captivated jet-setting hippies, whose arrival helped usher in a wave of stylish new businesses. One notable example is **Kichic** *(kichic.com; doubles from $280),* a private residence turned nine-room barefoot luxury hotel on the windswept beach of Las Pocitas. Owner Cristina "Kiki" Gallo, a Lima native, made Máncora her home more than three decades ago when it was little more than a roadside oasis. "There was no electricity, our fridge ran on kerosene, and the nearest house was more than two miles away," she told me after I checked in. It was hard to imagine that spartan scene while sitting in a beautiful living room dotted with artifacts Gallo brought back from trips to India and Guatemala.

Gallo explained that she was inspired to leave the comforts of cosmopolitan life behind by the exploits of her adventurous grandfather, Count Zygmunt Broel-Plater. He moved to Peru from Poland after World War II and worked at the famed Fishing Club resort in nearby Cabo Blanco, a town that attracted the likes of Ernest Hemingway and Marilyn Monroe. "It was the golden age," Gallo said. The tony hotel fell into disrepair and closed in the 1970s, and the celebrities are long gone. But now Máncora seems to have entered a golden age of its own.

The next morning, I grabbed my board and hitched another ride—this time on a horse with one of the local cowboys who often trot along the shore, ferrying travelers for a bit of extra cash. I hopped off on the beach at Del Wawa, where local reggae music filled the air. It's home to **Surf Point** *(fb.com/alan.valdiviezopena),* a surf and kiteboarding school run by Alan Valdiviezo.

As a casual enthusiast, I couldn't help feeling slightly intimidated by his bronzed, chiseled

ILLUSTRATION BY MAY PARSEY

An auto-rickshaw dashes down Avenida Piura, Máncora's main street.

crew, but their friendliness made my nerves evaporate. While Máncora and its good-looking denizens might initially draw comparisons to Montauk or Malibu, the whole scene is missing the pretentiousness that can cause visitors to feel like outsiders.

Nose daubed in sunscreen, I paddled with Carlos, Alan's brother and my surf pro for the day. As we patiently waited for the first set to come in, tiny salt crystals on my cheeks began to crackle in the warmth of the equatorial sun. "*¡Ey! ¡Ya llegan!*" he cheered excitedly, alerting me that the waves were fast approaching.

When the barrel drew me forward, I pushed myself up and cut left into a pristine curl. The break on Máncora's main beach was gentle and inviting, creating a great environment for a beginner like me to get comfortable with the basics. To get a real taste of the Peruvian Pipeline, Carlos told me, we'd need to venture south to towns like Lobitos and Vichayito. I mentally bookmarked both for a future trip.

Later, in the dwindling light of dusk, I walked to Avenida Piura, the town's main drag, in search of ceviche. In most parts of Peru, the dish is eaten in the mornings, when the star ingredient—often tuna or mahi-mahi—is straight from the sea. But Máncora's thriving fishing trade means fresh catches come in around the clock. Behind a cloud of dust stirred up by zooming motorbikes, I found **La Sirena d'Juan** *(fb.com/lasirenadejuan; entrées $10–$11),* a candlelit restaurant packed with both locals and out-of-towners.

After starting my meal with a few plates of *tiradito,* or Peruvian-style sashimi, I was joined by Juan Seminario Garay, the owner and Cordon Bleu–trained chef behind La Sirena and **Yuka** *(51-73-794-189; prix fixe $10),* a Japanese-Peruvian bar just down the road. As I sipped my pisco sour, Seminario Garay reflected on his hometown and how it continues to defy people's expectations. "They come here for the surf, but they return for the food," he asserted proudly.

On my final day, I decided to go for one last dip in the Pacific. The breeze was already warm as I ventured out just after dawn. My arms moved in ritualistic rhythm, ripples dispersing around me and reflecting the glimmer of the rising sun.

The loud, long exhale of a distant whale jolted me out of my reverie—a reminder that humpbacks make their annual migration through the area between July and October. Gazing far into the blush-tinted horizon, I spotted the gentle giant's tail poking out of the water. I have a feeling I'll return to Máncora every year, too.

Mother, St. Barts, *a 1995 photograph by Sally Gall.*

BROAD STROKES

Swimming in the ice-cold waters off England's spectacular Dorset coast evokes a sense of freedom for **SOPHY ROBERTS**—one that the longtime travel writer hasn't experienced since the pandemic began.

AS DAWN BREAKS, I walk down to the beach to join my friend. I'm looking forward to our swim today. The English Channel is gleaming shell-pink. The waves meet the shore in gentle folds, as if an invisible hand is shaking out a bolt of velvet. There are no boats on the water, no tourists playing on floating unicorns, no dogs being walked. This is in part because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mostly it is because it is seven in the morning.

To my right stands Golden Cap, one of the highest points on England's southern coastline, its steep cliffs the color of runny honey. I observe the strata of rock rising some 600 feet above the beach, layered like a mille-feuille of deep time. How many ages can I think of? Jurassic. Cretaceous. Anthropocene. My vocabulary runs out at three.

But if the words elude me, the metaphor in the landscape does not. This beautiful swath of England is my bedrock. My family lives here—mother, father, husband, sisters, kids—where Dorset rubs against the border with Devon, close to the Regency town of Lyme Regis. This sliver of sea is always beckoning me; it is visible from the room where I write.

I strip down to my bathing suit, leaving my clothes in the lee of an upturned boat pulled onto the shore, and head for the water's edge. I move as awkwardly as a teenager, the arches of my feet refusing to adjust to the shape of the ovoid stones. It is a pretty landscape, but glamorous it ain't. Britain isn't known for its swimming pools, unlike Spain or California. Not only is it usually raining but we're also ringed with rocky strands and cold seas: the Atlantic, the North Sea, the English Channel.

Until the pandemic, I never thought to dip even a toe into the water, except on the very hottest days. But since travel has been restricted, I've turned to ocean swimming to fill the void. I've done it almost every day, including on the two trips I've made elsewhere in recent months, to Donegal in Ireland and Ullapool in the Scottish Highlands.

The pink dawn tricks me into thinking it will be warm. I never seem to learn. When I push off from the steeply shelving beach into the water, the shock is immediate. My chest tightens. My neck feels like it is ringed in ice. I swim as quickly as I can, counting the 10 seconds it takes for my body to numb, until I can feel the flood of endorphins and the triumph of my fast-beating heart as I swim into a warm seam of sunshine.

Finding my rhythm, I cut a path through the water parallel to the horizon. I drift away from homeschooling the kids, which I've struggled to adjust to in recent months. I forget about the news cycle, which has been so relentless. Since May, when I took up this habit, I've been swimming to enter a different state of mind.

It was my friend who persuaded me to try. She is like a fish. She moves quickly through the deep water with a powerful front crawl. She and I like it here at Seatown: the pebbles that hurt our feet keep other people away. We leave the unofficial bathing clubs to other, more sociable people—the ones who swim together in groups down at the sandy beach in Lyme Regis, or further east along the coast at West Bay.

But how much longer will she and I have this strand to ourselves? Because I'm not the only convert. If we come even half an hour later, others start to arrive. Sometimes I talk with them—the psychotherapist in his seal-colored wet suit, who moved to England from Chicago; the ad executive who has fled the city for a farm. This pandemic year, they too have been drawn to the water cure for the first time. Is it just because vacations are difficult? Because we have time to discover our own backyards?

For me, it's more elemental than that. In these restricting times, cold-water swimming offers some parity with the state of grace I feel in empty landscapes—the Masai Mara, the Arctic, the Sahara—where, aside from

PHOTOGRAPH BY SALLY GALL

this beautiful corner of England, I've always been happiest. Where, immersed in space and silence, I can feel the essential reverberate.

From the water, my friend and I look to where the cliff has eroded. In a normal tourist season, this is where children and fossil hunters come to chip away at the debris, searching for the distinctive curls of ammonites. Together we float on our backs in the water, looking at the sky. We talk about some friends who are getting divorced. We chat about what her son will do if his university closes its doors. She asks about my work. I tell her I'm going to write a story about today—the exhilaration of feeling small on a giant earth. Just don't tell anyone about this beach, she pleads.

At the end of the day, the wonderful thing about the ocean is that there is enough room for everyone to escape the sensation of being locked in. To live in such close proximity to this freedom is a privilege I hope I'll never take for granted again.

LITTLE RIVER'S BIG MOMENT

A former industrial neighborhood in Miami is now a magnet for the city's new creative class.

BY JANCEE DUNN

▲ *Ramen with shrimp tempura and wakame at Yuzu, a Japanese restaurant in the Citadel.*

A FEW YEARS AGO, the first wave of artists began leaving Wynwood and the Design District, Miami's traditional cultural hubs, as rents in those neighborhoods crept upward. Most of them wound up in Little River, a quiet, 1½-square-mile enclave wedged between Little Haiti and the historic, oak-tree-dotted village of El Portal. (The area is named for the waterway that meanders through its blocks before emptying into nearby Biscayne Bay.)

That trickle eventually became a mass exodus. Once filled with neglected boatbuilding warehouses and rattan furniture manufacturers, Little River has become the city's most desired neighborhood for young and ambitious entrepreneurs, artists, fashion designers, and restaurateurs. Locals have labeled it the Silver Lake of Miami, and the area is currently flourishing with new boutiques, eateries, and galleries, as well as fun, experimental events like pop-up planting workshops and weeklong jazz-band residencies.

The transformation began in 2014. That's when Ashley Abess, a former fashion executive, and her husband, Matthew Vander Werff, became captivated by Little River's existing artists' enclave, its industrial past, and its walkability. They began quietly buying up dozens of neglected buildings, renovating them, and finding tenants looking for spaces to open unconventional businesses.

Sipping a *cortado* at a sun-splashed picnic table at the Imperial Moto Café, a coffeehouse and motorcycle shop, Vander Werff told

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: FUJIFILMGIRL/COURTESY OF THE CITADEL; KEVIN MELÉNDEZ/COURTESY OF MVW PARTNERS; COURTESY OF IMPERIAL MOTO CAFÉ; JEANNE CANTO/COURTESY OF ROSE COLOURED

The Brian Tate Trio performs in Little River.

me that he and Abess's primary goal was to keep rents down and maintain Little River's pleasingly noncorporate vibe.

"We were looking for the independent coffee purveyor or design studio, rather than the big chains," he said as we navigated our way past a group of fashionable locals. "The neighborhood felt very cozy, and we wanted it to stay that way."

Little River's profile is sure to rise even more next year, when a $30 million nonprofit arts center, Oolite Arts, will open in a new building on the edge of Little Haiti. Its primary mission is to provide artists with free studio and gallery space—another reason for a return visit. Here, my pick of the standout spots to scope out on your next trip to Miami.

IMPERIAL MOTO CAFÉ

This motorbike emporium rebuilds and resells vintage café racers, lightweight motorcycles that were used to zip riders from one European café to another in their 1970s heyday. A full coffee menu is on offer, with beans from Counter Culture Coffee. After caffeinating, you can get a hot shave or a haircut from J&H Barbers, which has taken over the back of the space. *imperialmoto.com.*

FABRICE TARDIEU

Footwear designer Tardieu learned his craft at his parents' shoe factory in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. After a stint at Giorgio Armani in Paris, he launched his own label, featuring hand-stitched leather sneakers and boots inspired by Miami street culture. When I stopped by his sleek gray shop, he showed me a perpetual best seller: the men's Garry dress sneaker, emblazoned, graffiti-style, with Tardieu's signature slogan, "One battle at a time, one day at a time." *fabricetardieu.com; shoes from $295.*

THE CITADEL

A plant-festooned artisanal food hall in a former bank, the Citadel showcases the cream of local culinary talent, like Haitian-born chef Christian Dominique's modern Caribbean spot Manjay's (my favorite dish: the "Kreyol style" braised pork with avocado and plantain fries). *thecitadelmiami.com.*

ROSE COLOURED

This boutique florist specializes in wild, artsy arrangements with lush, unexpected textures. Owner Sara Rose Darling—yes, that's her real name—has a background in art history, which I recognized in her thoughtful creations. *rosecolouredfloral.com; bouquets from $58.*

BILL BRADY MIAMI

With his keen eye for up-and-coming talent, Brady has given many of today's prominent contemporary artists their first shows, such as Japanese neo-Expressionist Tomoo Gokita and Spanish painter and sculptor Javier Calleja. *billbradygallery.com.*

ISHINE365

This swimwear shop is located in the luxe, palm-fringed outdoor shopping bazaar Miami Ironside. Founders Christina Pino and Katrina Silva have built a following for their body-positive designs. *ishine365.com.*

From left: The flower shop Rose Coloured; racing bikes in front of Imperial Moto Café.

ODE TO JOY

Around this time of year, the Caribbean is usually awhirl with color, costumes, and jubilant noise. As the pandemic puts a pause on the revelry, **KRISTIN BRASWELL** reflects on Carnivals past—and the incomparable sense of freedom they can inspire.

THE FIRST TIME my feet hit the pavement in Port of Spain, Trinidad, the sun was showing no mercy. But that scorching Caribbean heat was nothing compared to the electric energy of the moment: the sea of neon and pastel feathers bouncing to the music, the hands reaching toward the sky and feet stomping in unison, the strangers hugging as though they were old friends. The heat didn't matter, because the only thing I felt was joy.

Every year, right before Lent, thousands of people from around the world wait for this moment: Carnival Tuesday, the culmination of days of huge parties called fetes. Over the week, my body is doused in paint, oil, and mud, and moves in positions that would make some people blush. I welcome drink and shun sleep, then repeat. In Trinidad, my days end at Maracas Beach with an ice cold Carib beer and a view of the ocean that passes no judgment on those of us using the warm sand as a napping place—until we start up again. The grand finale is an uninhibited celebration fueled by rum, soca music, and the desire to "get on bad." In other words, to simply be free.

Over the past seven years, I've celebrated Carnival in Trinidad, Barbados, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, Anguilla, Grenada, and London. Every time, the sense of freedom I feel only grows stronger. Back at home in Los Angeles, things are framed in relation to time: work deadlines, restaurant reservations, phone calls. But during

▲ *A Carnival performer in full regalia.*

SUNG KUK KIM/ALAMY

Carnival, there is no beginning or end. There are no dress codes, formalities, or penalties for showing up exactly as you are.

While outsiders might see only scanty costumes, Carnival is rooted in historical rebellion. In the 18th century, enslaved West Africans and freed Blacks in Trinidad were banned from joining the masquerade balls held by French plantation owners leading up to Lent. So out in the fields, they drew on their various cultures—and their ingenuity—to create their own celebration, called Canboulay, around the harvesting and burning of sugarcane.

Since Trinidadian emancipation in 1838, Canboulay has evolved into what we know as Carnival. Those famous parades are inspired by the historical masquerades, now known as mas. (The organized groups that participate are known as bands.) And then there's J'Ouvert, or "daybreak" in Creole. It marks the official beginning of Carnival, and is perhaps the most defiant celebration of all. During this sacred ritual, I wake up before the sun and join thousands of revelers already gathered in the streets. We wear shower caps and bandannas and clothing we don't mind getting messy. *Very* messy. By the time day breaks, I am euphoric, covered in glitter and likely a few splashes of rum. The cowbells and steel drums, the neon paint and powder, the loose chains hanging from bodies and the devil horns on heads—these are all symbols of a once-enslaved people taking freedom into their own hands.

This feeling of breaking free is so magnetic that today Carnival is celebrated on nearly every Caribbean island, by the diaspora in London and New York, and at Caribbean-style events as far away as Japan. Just as every island has its own unique identity, no two Carnivals look exactly alike. My first Carnival experience in Grenada, where Jab Jab culture takes center stage, was visceral and powerful. *Jab* is Grenadan patois, from the French *diable* ("devil"), and the attire worn during J'Ouvert there—thick chains, goat horns, and black oil—is a satirical representation of the oppression of slavery. The celebration in nearby Barbados, called Crop Over, comes not before Lent but in late summer—when enslaved Africans, whose forced labor made rum so profitable to the island, would mark the end of the sugarcane season. Today, the three-month-long celebration is one of the most popular in the world, even bringing Rihanna home to join in.

A partygoer at Trinidad's 2020 celebration, before the onset of the pandemic.

TARIQUE EASTMAN

During Carnival, there is no beginning or end. There are no penalties for showing up exactly as you are.

For me, nothing is more powerful than the music that fuels Carnival: soca, a cousin of calypso that fuses East Indian and African sounds, created in the 1970s by musician Garfield Blackman (a.k.a. Lord Shorty). Its hypnotizing rhythms have inspired dance styles that encourage (and often require) a looseness in the body, throwing the waistline in movements with names like winin' and wukkin' up and, yes, even the splits. The lyrics are powerful chants that become booming echoes at every fete. In the words of Freetown Collective and DJ Private Ryan, in their song "Feel the Love": *We are such a blessed tribe/Sweeter than a million bees/People live a thousand lives/And never feel this free.*

There's a word in Carnival culture, *tabanca*: a longing for celebration so visceral that one feels physically sick. Such withdrawals are shared widely each year both in song lyrics and on social media. But this year, the *tabanca* cure will never come. Trinidad's 2021 Carnival was canceled due to rising COVID-19 cases. That joy and camaraderie and winin' are only a memory for now. Virtual events have made for a new type of connection, but there is still nothing sweeter to me than the sound of feet pounding against pavement in unison under the Caribbean sun. So until the next Carnival, we wait—and we remember what freedom feels like.

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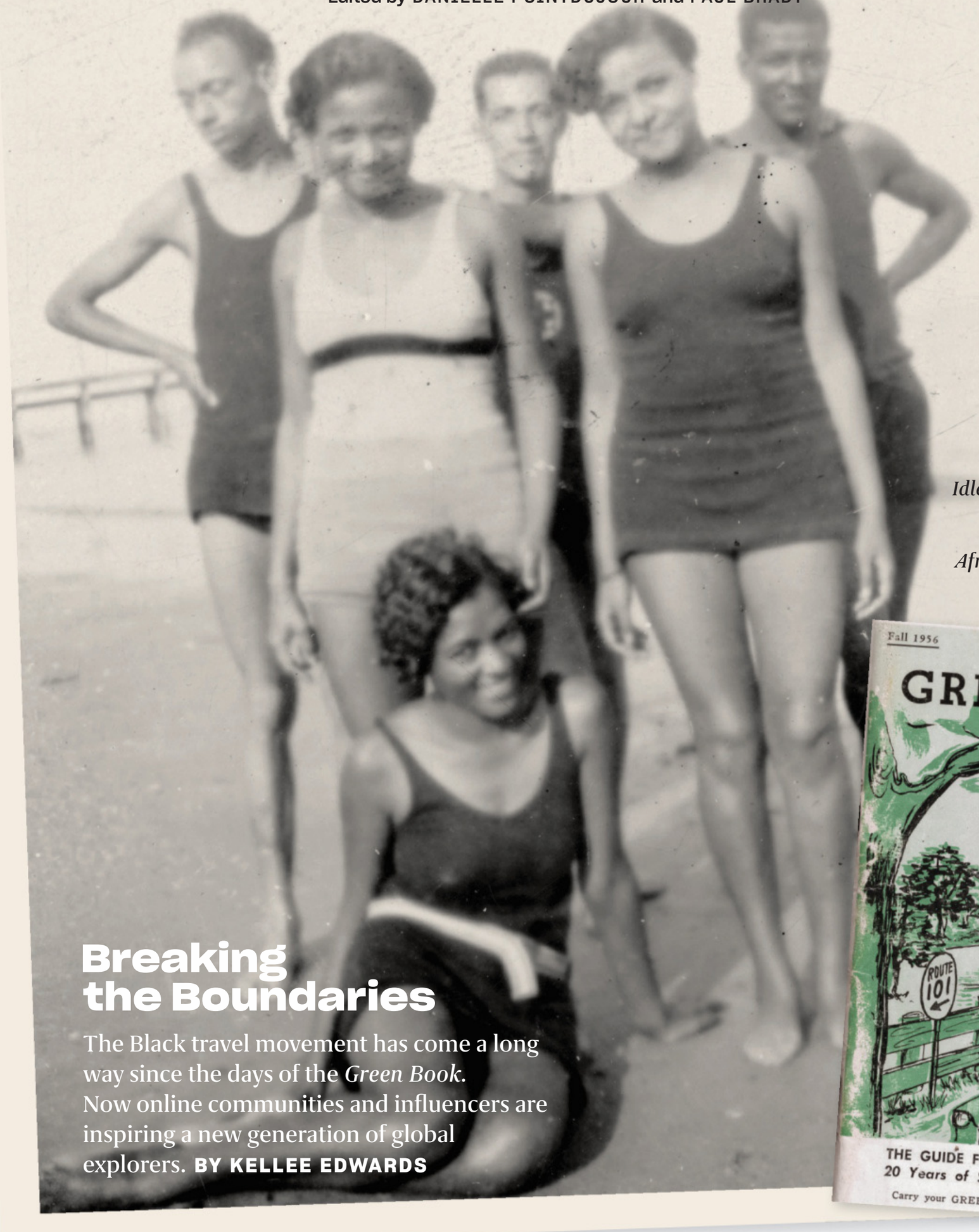
Intelligent Traveler

TIPS AND TRICKS TO HELP YOU TRAVEL SMARTER

Edited by DANIELLE POINTDUJOUR and PAUL BRADY



A snapshot taken in 1938 in Idlewild, Michigan, a resort town that welcomed African Americans.

Breaking the Boundaries

The Black travel movement has come a long way since the days of the *Green Book*. Now online communities and influencers are inspiring a new generation of global explorers. **BY KELLEE EDWARDS**

FROM TOP: THE ABBOTT SENGSTACKE FAMILY PAPERS/ROBERT ABBOTT SENGSTACKE/GETTY IMAGES; THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK

From top: Evita Robinson, seen in Harlem, New York; Mario Rigby in Zanzibar.

FEW PEOPLE would relish being told where they can and can't go. But that was the reality for African Americans living in the Jim Crow era.

From 1936 to 1966, *The Negro Motorist Green Book* and subsequent titles helped keep Black travelers and their families safe, with warnings about "sundown towns," where people of color could face intimidation and violence after dark, and recommendations on the hotels, restaurants, and businesses that would welcome them.

Thankfully, the original *Green Book* is no longer a necessity for the African American community. Black travelers have become an economic force, spending $109 billion on vacations in 2019, according to a recent study by MMGY Global, a marketing agency. Yet we still have concerns. In response, a powerful new Black travel movement has emerged over the past decade—one centered on giving travelers of color the advice, inspiration, and sense of community we need to explore the world.

One formative moment was the 2011 creation of the Nomadness Travel Tribe, an invitation-only Facebook group, by New Jersey–based Evita Robinson. "The Nomadness brand has always been synonymous with community, risk taking, trailblazing, and trying new things first," Robinson says of the collective that started with just 100 members and is now more than 25,000 strong. Users swap tips and compile guides to destinations, with notes on accommodations, local experts, safety risks, and Black-owned businesses to support. One woman recently asked for tips on St. Lucia and, in particular, a recommendation for a trustworthy taxi service; another, just back from the island, replied with the phone number of the driver she'd used.

As Nomadness has grown, prominent Black travelers have also begun encouraging others to see the world. My own travel journey started around 11 years ago, when I set out to become a TV host—a realm traditionally dominated by older white men. I knew I'd have to go above and beyond to be considered by any network, so I became a pilot, a scuba diver, and adventurer and picked up more than 100,000 social media followers. In 2016, I became the first Black woman to host a show on the Travel Channel, *Mysterious Islands*. And last year, I hosted the first 24 episodes of *Let's Go Together,* the *Travel + Leisure* podcast that celebrates diversity and inclusion in travel.

Others are charting new courses—and, in turn, inspiring more Black travelers. Toronto-based eco-explorer Mario Rigby walked from Cape Town to Cairo between 2015 and 2018, sharing his adventures on his blog. "I've always found it imperative to see diverse faces in the world of exploration," Rigby, a *Let's Go Together* guest, tells me.

The momentum continues to grow, and Rigby, Robinson, and I are far from alone. Detroit's Jessica Nabongo reached her goal of visiting

Another 1938 photo from Idlewild, which became known as the Black Eden.

Imani Bashir at Batu Caves, a Hindu pilgrimage site in Malaysia.

every country in the world in 2019, making her the first Black woman to document accomplishing that feat, taking nearly 200,000 social media followers along for the ride. Chicago native Nathan Fluellen has been surfing around the world since 2017, giving back to communities he has visited and sharing his discoveries on Instagram. The Bay Area's Martinique Lewis has written the new *ABC Travel Green Book,* a modern-day version of the original that offers a global guide to Black-owned businesses. And countless other influencers, like fashion-minded Cedric Wood, are motivating Black people to travel, too. It's proof that, when it comes to where we can go, the answer is pretty much anywhere.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MATADOR NETWORK/COURTESY OF EVITA ROBINSON; COURTESY OF IMANI BASHIR; THE ABBOTT SENGSTACKE FAMILY PAPERS/ROBERT ABBOTT SENGSTACKE/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF MARIO RIGBY

A New Way to Navigate the World

One family is using social media to unlock some unexpected destinations. **BY IMANI BASHIR**

For Black travelers, safety and cultural acceptance are often top of the list when choosing a destination. But *Black traveler* doesn't represent a monolithic group: our individuality impacts the way each of us moves through the world. As a Black Muslim woman, mother, and expat, my needs look very different from those of a Black LGBTQ person on vacation. I often consider whether or not my hijab (headscarf) is lawful in a given destination. Will I be able to find somewhere to pray? How are darker-skinned people treated? What about Muslims?

When my family was planning a move to Asia a few years ago, a Facebook group for Black Americans, Brothas & Sistas of China, proved invaluable in answering these questions, and many more. Most Black American expats in the country opt for cities with bigger international populations, such as Beijing, Shanghai, or Shenzhen. But we were landing in Chongqing—a city my husband and I had never even heard of—thanks to his new job there as a coach for an American-football program.

Facebook users advised me that my son and I might be photographed, and even touched, without our consent. More positively, we were constantly told how family-friendly China was going to be, that it was an extremely safe place where both children and elders are held in high regard. It turned out to be true, as Chinese people—and, in particular, the older generation—doted on our son in Chongqing and in Wuhan, where we later moved.

We left China for a vacation in Malaysia in early 2020 and were unable to return, due to the spread of the coronavirus. We spent months living in hotels and Airbnbs, searching for a place where we could feel safe and comfortable. I once again found a safety net in online expat groups, which turned us on to Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. We now live in Cancún, which we've found to be focused on family and community. It's a place where we can leave behind some of the anxiety that comes with being Black in America, and where our son can just be a kid, swimming and building sandcastles on the beach.

◂ *McLeod Plantation Historic Site, in Charleston, South Carolina.*

▴ *The mural* Rhapsody, *in Austin, Texas.*

Black History Tours Are Finding a Broader Audience

After protests calling for racial justice, travelers are seeking out Black-centric storytelling in the places they visit.

BY SARAH ENELOW-SNYDER

TEXAS HAS LONG branded itself as part of the West, playing up cowboys and rodeos and playing down the history of slavery and segregation it shares with other Southern states. Most of the 30 million people who visit Austin in a typical year go for the music, the food, the swimming holes; Black history has so far been less of a draw. But Javier Wallace, who founded **Black Austin Tours** *(blackaustintours.com)* in 2019, aims to tell those lesser-known stories.

Wallace's family roots in the Austin area date back 200 years, and he explores this personal history in his two-hour excursions through the city's East Side. Like many, he's led his trips virtually in recent months. When I joined him over Zoom, he talked about how the Austin City Council forced Black families into a Negro District in 1928; legal and de facto segregation at the city's renowned parks and pools; and a 19th-century economy powered by plantations—including Ancient Oaks, where Wallace's ancestors were enslaved.

"We walk every day in these historical injustices," he says.

One important landmark on his tour is the Texas state capitol, a Renaissance Revival building in the heart of Austin constructed by Black prisoners in the 1880s. Wallace connects the story of the building's construction to broader topics, including convict labor, mass incarceration, the policing of Black communities, and the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

Nationwide protests against racial injustice in the spring and summer of 2020 have touched many aspects of American life—including the way we travel. Since then, Wallace tells me, he's noticed a major uptick in interest in his tours and, among the white visitors who seek him out, a desire to learn about the Black experience and become better allies.

"Did I start this tour in response to June?" Wallace says. "No, because this has been going on since 1492."

The protests have also prompted another look at the importance of Black representation at historic sites in Virginia—and a push to ensure Black visitors feel safe and welcome. To that end, Richmond—once the capital of the Confederacy—is growing its initiative **BLK RVA** *(visitblkrva.com),* which celebrates Black culture and businesses. **Montpelier** *(montpelier.org),* the home of President James Madison, tells the stories of the estate's enslaved people in consultation with their living descendants, and **Ben Lomond Historic Site** *(pwcgov.org),* a plantation house in Manassas, has a new virtual reality tour focusing on the lives of its enslaved people.

"Has something really changed this time?" asks Rita McClenny, president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation. "Yes, but change is always incremental."

Southeast of Fredericksburg, an ambitious restoration is under way

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF CHARLESTON COUNTY PARKS; COURTESY OF BLACK AUSTIN TOURS

COURTESY OF BLACK AUSTIN TOURS

at **Menokin** *(menokin.org),* where the delicate ruins of a 1769 plantation home are being partially encased in glass. Honoring the enslaved is one of the site's objectives, says Pia Spinner, Menokin's education research assistant. The grounds have been open to visitors throughout the restoration work, but last spring and summer, Menokin added deeper discussion of the lives of enslaved people in Virginia to its tours.

At the **McLeod Plantation Historic Site** *(ccprc.com),* in Charleston, South Carolina, the mission has always been to focus on the Black experience, according to Shawn Halifax, its cultural history interpretation coordinator. "The attention paid to Black voices by historic sites and museums has been a growing movement that really began in the 1970s," he says. The growth of Black Lives Matter since 2013 has accelerated the shift—as well as the fact that Dylann Roof photographed himself on a visit to McLeod before murdering nine people in a Black church in Charleston in 2015.

Back in Austin, Wallace is planning to hire additional guides and develop new tours—including one focused on the downtown area—thanks to increased demand and a coveted Heritage Tourism Grant from the city. He wants to demonstrate that Black influence extends beyond the East Side. "The contributions, experiences, and history of African people in this city," Wallace says, "are in every nook and cranny."

The Texas African American History Memorial, on the grounds of the state capitol.

Why Black Travel Matters

T+L asked six globally minded personalities to share their thoughts on the movement.

AS TOLD TO DANIELLE POINTDUJOUR

"When you're in another land and see someone who looks just like you, there's an understanding that happens, just with eye contact, that our presence in this place is, in itself, progress, and an experience we can pass down to our children."
—Roy Wood Jr., *comedian and correspondent for* The Daily Show with Trevor Noah

"I've looked for magic in the sunset on Anguilla and in intricate hand-painted sconces in Marrakesh, Morocco. But my favorite moment was dawn on New Year's Day in Accra, Ghana. It felt like the ancestors awoke with the sun to bless me."
—Bozoma Saint John, *chief marketing officer at Netflix*

"While filming my show, I found utopia in countries like Rwanda, South Africa, and Zambia. Everywhere I turned, I was in the majority. I didn't stand out. Experiencing cultures across Africa let me reconnect with my ancestors."
—Nathan Fluellen, *host of* World Wide Nate: African Adventures

"Travel has shown me how to persevere, love myself, and be more confident. Travel taught me how to enjoy the life I have—and to create a movement that helps others who look like me, a fat Black man, live life now."
—Jeff Jenkins, *CEO of Chubby Diaries, an online community*

"To travel the world is a privilege. To have the opportunity to experience my Blackness abroad is an honor."
—Skylar Kearney, *social media strategist*

"Black people, like all people, come in so many different colors and shapes, with different religions and beliefs. And when we travel around the world, we show others those different representations."
—Jubril Agoro, *founder of Passport Heavy, a social media consultancy*

Horseback Riding on the Beach

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The Travel Advisors Charting a New Course

An emerging field of experts is crafting experiences geared toward Black adventurers.

BY TANYA A. CHRISTIAN

IN 2012, attorney Sheila Ruffin noticed a gap in the travel market. After relocating to St. Thomas, in the U.S. Virgin Islands, to work on maritime and environmental issues, the Howard University School of Law grad realized that the yacht-charter business was geared almost exclusively toward one demographic—white.

"I thought to myself, *Wow, I should change that,*" Ruffin recalls. The Virginia native was already an avid traveler, so she decided to start her own company aimed at Black adventurers. In 2019, **Soca Caribbean Yacht Charters** *(socayacht charters.com)* was born, making Ruffin one of a growing number of Black advisors who curate luxury experiences for a group that has

▲ *From top: A Sisters Traveling Solo trip to Fez, Morocco; morning yoga in Bali, during an OMNoire retreat.*

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF SISTERS TRAVELING SOLO; COURTESY OF OMNOIRE

T+L Travel Advisory Board member Kareem George, visiting Seoul.

A tour of Cartagena, Colombia, organized by Sisters Traveling Solo.

often been overlooked by traditional tourism outfitters.

"Black travelers, as a whole, have very diverse interests, just like everyone else," notes Kareem George, founder of the Michigan-based agency **Culture Traveler** *(culturetraveler.com)*. A member of T+L's Travel Advisory Board, George says his clients have all sorts of requests, though destinations like the Caribbean, Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, and South America tend to be among the most popular. "That's because they're iconic places—but also because of historical connections that clients might feel based on their own ancestry."

The Caribbean is also key for Carl Napoleon, the founder of **Carnival Jumpers** *(carnivaljumpers.com)*. His Brooklyn, New York, company's mission is to increase access to the Carnival experience by facilitating trips to these quintessential island celebrations. Carnival Jumpers handles basics like lodging, as well as more complex arrangements such as costume selections and introductions to mas bands or krewes, vastly simplifying the planning process.

Some advisors strive to build community among their guests. Christina Rice, a certified yoga and meditation instructor in Georgia, places wellness at the center of her **OMNoire** *(omnoire.com)* retreats for women of color. "I always say that a retreat is an extension of the retreat leader, so it's important for attendees to truly know that person," Rice says. Pre-trip video calls are an integral part of her process, familiarizing guests with the workshops, small-group conversations, guided meditations, and yoga classes that fill her itineraries, like those planned for Ghana and Portugal in 2021.

Cole Banks, Atlanta-based founder of **Sisters Traveling Solo** *(sisterstravelingsolo.com)*, also focuses on creating connections. She's taken groups of solo women on a hiking expedition in Greece, a museum-centric jaunt through Morocco, and a beach retreat in the Seychelles. And while the destinations are part of the draw, so too are the potential friendships—like the ones forged between a trio of STS travelers who met in China in 2017 and now plan yearly getaways, most recently to Cartagena, Colombia.

"These women go from being strangers to lifelong friends," Banks says of the people she brings together. "I see it happen on every single trip."

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF KAREEM GEORGE; COURTESY OF SISTERS TRAVELING SOLO

Going to West Africa? It's a Trip Like No Other

African Americans have lately gravitated toward ancestral homelands like Benin, Ghana, and Togo. Special planning helps these heritage travelers have a positive experience.

BY TRAVIS LEVIUS

WEST AFRICAN must-sees like Ghana's Elmina Castle and Senegal's Maison des Esclaves, relics of the transatlantic slave trade, are some of the most important historical sites on the continent. They have an even deeper meaning for travelers like Rondel Holder. A Black New Yorker with family from Grenada and Jamaica, he's one of a growing number of people of the African diaspora returning to West Africa to explore his roots.

"I still get chills thinking about the dungeons and cellars of Elmina Castle," Holder says, recalling his visit in 2019. "For a lot of Black people, there's a longing to connect and a longing to learn about where we're from."

A number of developments are driving a surge of interest in heritage trips to West Africa. Advancements in DNA testing—led by Africa-focused companies such as **AfroRoots DNA** *(afrorootsdna.com)* and **African Ancestry** *(africanancestry.com)*—are making it easier for Black Americans to research their genetic backgrounds. Airlines, including Delta, have expanded service to West Africa. Tourism campaigns such as Ghana's 2019 Year of Return, timed to coincide with the 400 years since the first enslaved Africans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, also attracted the diaspora. And a growing number of tour operators are stepping in to handle the logistics of these trips.

"We've never really had the chance to grow from the past," says Atlanta-based Eric Martin, cofounder of **Black & Abroad** *(weareblackandabroad.com)*, which operates group tours to Ghana and Senegal. "By making a pilgrimage to these West African countries, seeing the sights, hearing the personal accounts of our African ancestors directly from their surviving descendants, we have a cathartic connection."

Black travelers say the experience can be life-changing.

"I feel more in touch with myself and my culture than ever before," says Brian Oliver, a Baltimore-based nonprofit director who visited the five African countries that matched his DNA: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo. Nicole Brewer, a teacher and blogger living in Oman whose DNA results showed a link to Ghana, added the country to her short list of places for retirement, after visiting during the Year of Return. Others, like Kristin Tellis Quaye of St. Petersburg, Florida, have turned heritage travel into a new career. A practicing lawyer, she also now runs **Certified Africa** *(certifiedafrica.com)*, a firm that organizes trips to West Africa.

While these soul-stirring journeys are a powerful means for Black

A naming ceremony organized by Black & Abroad in Yamoransa, Ghana, in 2019.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF RONDEL HOLDER; COURTESY OF BLACK & ABROAD

Rondel Holder, right, and the Togolese fashion designer Koko, exploring Lomé, Togo.

Americans to trace their lineage, they also require careful planning.

"The reality is, Africa has its own complexities and perspectives that don't always match the idealized view of the continent those in the diaspora have," says Kwesi Ewoodzie, a Ghanaian-American sociologist and founding director of **Culture Beyond Borders** *(cbbexperience.com),* an Atlanta tour operator. The right guide can help navigate language barriers and facilitate meaningful cultural interactions. Facebook groups such as Black Travel Movement and Travel Africa Movement are excellent resources, filled with advice from locals. And media outlets like *Essence* and *Travel Noire* offer sound advice, often with Black Americans specifically in mind.

Another challenge: DNA testing can trace only Black Americans' racial backgrounds and geographic origins, not the names or lineages of their families. Despite all of this, Holder says, his visit to Ghana was "deeply spiritual."

"You're standing where tens of thousands of Black people were enslaved, learning about everything they went through before they were shoved onto boats to cross the Atlantic," he recalls. "So, to be back in Africa willingly and happily, in the place where all of that happened, it's like my ancestors' wildest dreams."

Can Black Travelers Find Themselves in India, Too?

A photographer discovered, on a trip to Rajasthan, that the answer is a resounding yes.

BY NANCY LOVA

As a Black traveler, I've had my share of difficulties. I've been ignored and belittled by waiters and hotel staff. Locals have grabbed my arms and taken my photo. I've been told I look "too exotic" to be from London, my hometown. Women have touched my hair without my permission. Men have catcalled, shouting the names of celebrities who look nothing like me—except for the fact that they, too, are Black.

These disrespectful gestures are almost enough to discourage me from traveling at all.

So when I set out for India in April 2019, I braced myself for plenty of negative attention and racial comments. Instead, I discovered a place that felt like home and that rekindled my love of exploring the world.

Which isn't to say it was easy. To make the most of my trip, I relied on a few tactics that helped me better navigate the destination. My first step was to book a room at a world-class hotel, the **Leela Palace Udaipur** *(theleela.com)* on Lake Pichola, which *Travel + Leisure* readers ranked as the best in the world in 2019.

It may seem obvious that a luxury hotel would provide top-notch service, but the benefits of my stay there went beyond the on-property pampering. The Leela's concierges handpicked kind and knowledgeable guides who they knew I would feel safe with. These guides took me to places of worship like Jagdish Temple, where I got a crash course in Hindu beliefs, and markets where I tried *kachori,* a deep-fried chickpea-flour snack, and *jalebi,* a traditional sweet. The photo-taking opportunities were nearly limitless.

The author captured the view of the pool at the Leela Palace Udaipur.

Another key was seeking out local women in markets whenever I had a question, whether it was about directions, shops, or where to eat. Despite a language barrier, they often welcomed me through gestures like placing a vermilion bindi on my forehead or setting a garland of marigolds around my neck. In these moments, I felt protected and embraced.

Lastly, I reminded myself to keep an open mind. I brought my preconceptions to India, no doubt, but nobody there seemed surprised to learn I was from London. I'd gone to Rajasthan expecting one thing and left having learned that, while some trips may disappoint us, others can be life-affirming revelations.

NANCY LOVA

The Belmond Amaryllis *moored on the Burgundy Canal near Longecourt-en-Plaine.*

High-Water Mark

IS THERE A BETTER WAY TO SEE BURGUNDY THAN ON A PRIVATE CANAL CRUISE? NINA CAPLAN AND HER HUSBAND, PHOTOGRAPHER WILLIAM CRAIG MOYES, BOARD A LUXURIOUS BARGE AND EMBARK ON A SLOW, SYBARITIC JOURNEY—WHILE SAMPLING THE REGION'S LEGENDARY *GRANDS CRUS*.

> The women and children who once worked the barges along the canals of France would probably sigh with wonder to hear that this form of travel is now a luxury activity. Those lacking horses or mules were sent down the towpath with canvas strips across their chests to pull the shallow boats, piled high with commercial goods, using muscle and willpower. Sometimes the men joined them, but usually, they stayed aboard to steer.

That was more than a century ago, and things have changed. How they have changed! On the Belmond *Amaryllis,* a private-charter barge with four en suite cabins, a living room, and a small but perfectly formed heated swimming pool on deck, we rolled along effortlessly, thanks to a very quiet combustion engine. The trip was so smooth that the gently steaming pool water never so much as splashed.

Belmond, which owns and operates several other luxury barges in France, usually sends a car to meet guests at the airport, but my husband, Craig, and I had left London months before to ride out the pandemic in France. We split our time between the two locations, as my stepchildren are enrolled in French schools—which meant they were able to join us for our first evening aboard.

On a late summer evening, our guide, Jonathan Forscini, picked us up at our home in the Burgundy village of Vitteaux and drove us south over wooded hills and through toasted fields toward the medieval town of Beaune. After a while, the slopes began to sprout rows of vines. I glimpsed the hill of Corton, a legendary name to wine lovers, and craned to see the vines of the celebrated Corton and Corton-Charlemagne *grands crus* before the roadside trees intervened. The children couldn't wait to reach the pool, and I felt the same about the chance to dive into this world-famous wine region.

At Seurre, the six staff members of the *Amaryllis* were lined up to welcome us, including Richard Fletcher, our pilot; Neil Churchill, the chef; and Beverly Brennan, our host. For this week they were at our service, and we were encouraged to treat the barge as our home—a luxurious form of isolation that was particularly welcome in the middle of a pandemic, as was the L'Occitane verbena hand sanitizer and the pile of disposable masks placed discreetly in our room. (The staff wore masks and stayed nearby but never too close; for us passengers, wearing masks was discretionary.) The living room was styled in a gentler version of Louis XVI—lots of wood, gilt lamps, and sofas upholstered in shades of taupe. Canapés, champagne, and sodas were waiting.

Nora, left, and Ishbel, two of the author's stepdaughters, on board the Amaryllis.

The town of St.-Jean-de-Losne, as seen from the barge.

Passing through a lock near Brazey-en-Plaine.

On the deck, the pool shone turquoise against the darkening canal. France's first major man-made waterway was the Briare Canal, which joined the Seine and Loire rivers in 1642. (Construction had been delayed by the assassination of the king in 1610.) Many others followed, but the Burgundy Canal, completed in 1832, was one of the most important: a vital conduit between the Seine, the river of Paris, and the great Rhône, which flows through Lyon to the Mediterranean; it connects northern France to the south. All sorts of goods were conveyed via these marvels of engineering, but one of the most important was wine.

I've taken cruises where the waist-expanding dinners were at odds with the need to squeeze through the inch of space around the bed, but the cabins on the *Amaryllis* had room for wardrobes and desks. The beds were high enough to suit a French monarch: I could imagine looking regally down on my courtiers, before demanding help to reach the floor. That's about the only service Beverly and her team didn't provide, but it was worth the scramble up and down to lie in bed, gazing out of windows flush with the water, with a duck's-eye view of Burgundy skimming past.

The children weren't interested in Burgundy. Once done with the pool, their focus was dinner. The canapés had piqued their expectations: "I can tell the chef is going to be really good," Nora, aged 11, whispered to me, and she was right. At a table strewn with faceted beads that caught the candlelight and made it flicker onto the bucolic mural, pea velouté with mascarpone and drizzled truffle oil was followed by cod wrapped in

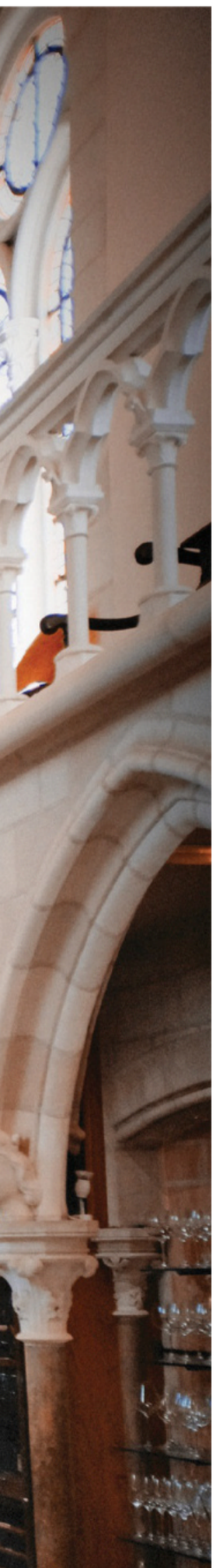
A rosé from the Drouhin-Laroze vineyards on board the Amaryllis.

The restaurant at Abbaye de la Bussière, a hotel in a 12th-century abbey.

delicately flavored pancetta, topped with a tangle of herbs and radishes. The nightly cheese selection was mostly Burgundian, always French. Much of it probably contravenes U.S. pasteurization rules, so this would be an American's chance to really indulge. Individual crème brûlées, decorated with strawberries, were delicious but the size of a plate. I was the only person not to finish mine.

Food was sourced locally every other day. Given that the boat traveled only in the mornings, at less than three miles an hour, that meant really local. One of France's greatest joys is the boulangerie. There are so many bakeries that most French people keep a map of the best ones in their heads, and the *Amaryllis* staff, who used a different one each time we stopped, clearly did, too. Jonathan, a career bargeman who even met his wife on the boats, laughed when I remarked that he seemed continually to be running off to market. "You think you're signing up to be a guide," he said. "But the job is 60 percent food shopping!"

Our first full day began sadly, with a farewell to the girls. Swanning around on a luxury barge was all very well, but school was due to start that week. Craig and I took our melancholy across the river Saône



into St.-Jean-de-Losne, a sweet village that has seen its fair share of trouble. In the 17th century, it was besieged by the Imperial army, led by drunken general Matthias Gallas; the villagers fended them off with the help of the river, which obligingly flooded and washed away the enemy's encampment. It was surprising how many times these waterways flowed into the stories I heard, but perhaps it shouldn't have been. In landlocked Burgundy, they were once the essence of life.

Beyond the imposing riverside church, with its stone arches and classic Burgundian roof of multicolored tiles, we stopped at a rickety 15th-century house that is now a pleasingly peculiar museum. The Musée de la Batellerie, or Canal Transport Museum, is a little paradise for barge geeks, with models of boats through the decades, including a fishing barge that used to ride the river from village to village selling its live catch along the way, and a metal diving suit, complete with bubble helmet and lead-capped boots, for underwater boat repairs. "It weighs about 220 pounds—you couldn't get out of the water alone," the docent told me. We tend to believe that faster is better, but the information that a barge can carry about 425 tons made me wonder whether we aren't missing something. That's more than 10 times a standard truck's load.

The *Amaryllis* stayed put in the afternoons, but we didn't. "Next stop, Romanée-Conti!" Jonathan cried cheerily, naming the most prestigious estate in Burgundy as he ushered us and a trio of bikes into the van. This was our starting point for a tour of Burgundy's top vineyards, the *grands crus.* Every Belmond boat trip is carefully tailored to suit the guests' interests. I love cycling in Burgundy, not because I'm sporty—quite the contrary. There are no steep bike paths in this area, because those hills aren't just breathtakingly pretty; they are some of the most valuable farmland in the world. Vines like poor, stony soils: the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes that grow on the flatter, more fertile land are much less valuable. So guess where they put the cyclists?

We pedaled past the lower extremities of Clos de Vougeot, a world-famous vineyard whose 125 acres are enclosed by a stone wall; past vines worth thousands of euros per bottle growing next to vines worth hundreds, although no amateur on a bicycle could tell the difference. Harvesting had begun. At Chambolle-Musigny we spotted a grape fight, the young harvesters pelting one another with expensive missiles. We paused to admire the patchwork of vines cascading scenically down the slope from the hilltop village of Morey-St.-Denis, then sped on to Gevrey-Chambertin, where something better awaited: a chance to taste the wines.

Christine Drouhin was welcoming but tired. With her husband, Philippe, she manages Domaine Drouhin-Laroze, and during harvest, she personally makes the workers three

Harvesting grapes at Domaine Drouhin-Laroze.

◂ *A table set for a picnic at Château de Longecourt, a ducal hunting lodge turned hotel in Longecourt-en-Plaine.*

▸ *From left: The Hospices de Beaune; a tapestry within the medieval hospital.*

▾ *A barge breakfast of poached egg on avocado toast.*

meals a day—with wine, naturally. "We were born into this tradition," she told us. "We sell our wines at a certain price, so we can feed our workers, and we do." Her choice is clearly a popular one: the same people return each year. "Our oldest harvester is 81! He's the first to arrive each morning. There he is at 7 a.m., drinking his coffee." We had passed Drouhin's daughter, Caroline, picking with the team; her son, Nicolas, was in the winery, overseeing the arrival of the grapes. Walking through the grounds, she gestured to her old house, where Caroline now lives with her own children, one of whom, a tiny girl, toddled past us. "The next generation of winemakers!" her grandmother cried. If she turns out to be right, that child will become the seventh generation; by now, almost half the family's land is *grand cru*.

Christine opened three 2015s for us to try: En Champs, from grapes that grow next to *premier cru* land; an especially delicious *premier cru,* Au Closeau; and Clos de Bèze, a Chambertin *grand cru*. But we didn't fret unduly over the quality designations. One of the delights of this trip was the excellence of the wine, each night at dinner and, ahem, at lunchtime. Never mind studying the impossibly complicated geography. The best way to appreciate Burgundy is to drink good Burgundy, at all levels, from *village* to *grand cru*. And with Jonathan's help (he was also our sommelier), we certainly did that.

We returned to the barge just in time for the *apéro*: the pre-dinner drink that, in my view, is the best part of any good day. Beverly served a plate of *gougères,* the Burgundian cheese puffs, accompanied by a bottle of Christine and Philippe's Chardonnay, and we relaxed as the sun sank toward the emerald water.

We awoke the next day to the engines revving, and the vexed question of whether to stay aboard or walk alongside, keeping pace with our floating home from lock to lock. Lunch would be a picnic, said Jonathan, and I had vague visions of rugs spread on the grass, paper plates, and flies in my wine.

Not exactly. The Château de Longecourt is an enormous, turreted castle, built in 1475. Stuccoed for a grand wedding in the 18th century, it now has a peeling exterior that doesn't detract from its imposing charm. On the bridge over the moat, lunch was spread across linen-covered tables, and Beverly waited with a chilled bottle of champagne. This fantasy of castle life was only slightly punctured when we spotted a man in his sixties, casually debonair in a T-shirt and jeans, leaning from the kitchen window, throwing

scraps to the swans and enormous fish. Although his family has owned the château for hundreds of years. Roland, the Count of St.-Seine, does everything "from polishing the brass to cutting the topiary," he informed us as we toured airy rooms stuffed with treasures. (How many bedrooms? "I'm not sure. Twenty? Thirty? It's really not so big.") We finished with a peek at the delightful cartoons (anti-Hitler jibes; cheeky, well-drawn mice) graffitied on the barn walls by American airmen billeted there during World War II.

This wasn't our only encounter with Occupied France. In Beaune, in the vast underground cellars where Maison Joseph Drouhin and others store millions of bottles of its wine, we were shown the space that Maurice Drouhin, who presided over the estate during the war, disguised with an artificial wall, so the thirsty Nazis wouldn't find his best cuvées. There is no connection between the Drouhin and Drouhin-Laroze wineries, but the confusion is very Burgundian, where everyone seems to have one of a handful of surnames.

Beaune is beautiful: a town of creamy stone amid the vineyards,

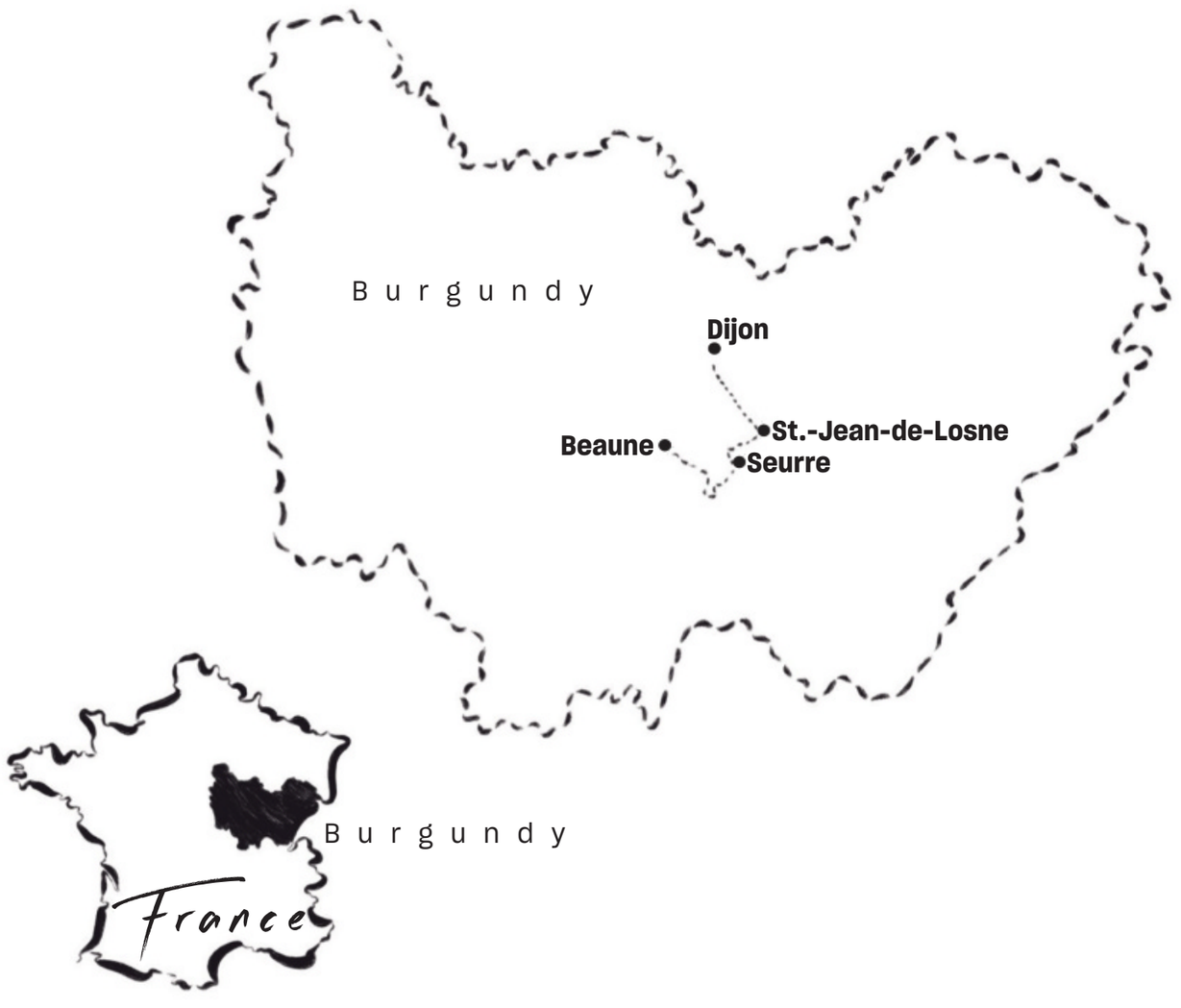


ILLUSTRATION BY MAY PARSEY

From top: Claus Sluter's 14th-century Well of Moses, *in Dijon; the city's food market.*

The medieval village of Châteauneuf-en-Auxois.

still encircled by the walls that protected it from aggressors for centuries. There are good restaurants and bars, old churches, and, of course, wineries. But Beaune also shelters one of the most extraordinary paintings I've ever seen, within a building that would still be worth the price of entry without it. The Hospices de Beaune was founded by Nicolas Rolin and his wife in 1443, when he belatedly realized that a career as the Duke of Burgundy's chancellor might not be the best route to a blissful afterlife.

The hospital is now elsewhere, but the building is amazing, a Gothic marvel with sumptuous decorations glorifying those wealthy benefactors and a roof gaudy with Burgundian glazed tiles. In a specially darkened room, Rogier van der Weyden's *Last Judgment* would give the most dedicated unbeliever pause: a gigantic, glowing, multi-paneled painting where, beneath the saints, ordinary people slink off to hell or trip lightly toward heaven. Theoretically, the giant electronic magnifying glass is out of action due to the pandemic. But we waited for the room to empty and then the attendant obliged, sending it gliding across the panels to illuminate their incredible detail.

August slipped into September, and at some point, I stopped the usual obsessive flicking on my phone and turned my full attention outward, to where the grass-bordered towpath unscrolled beneath trembling leaves and the sunshine glinted off the slow-moving water. I paddled in the pool as we went through a lock, marveling at Richard's ability, from the back of a 128-foot barge, to guide the nose exactly into place, with just a few inches to spare on either side,

while Aaron Belaga, a crew member, hovered, waiting to lasso a bollard with his rope. And I enjoyed the quiet drama of the darkened interiors brightening as the lock attendant winched open the sluices, the water levels rose, the mooring rope tightened, and we levitated toward ground level.

The bikes never again left the hold, but we weren't entirely lazy. There were pool dips, and forest-fringed towpath strolls, and a private lakeside yoga session on the smooth lawn of the Abbaye de la Bussière, a hotel that still looks like the 12th-century Cistercian abbey it once was. And we hiked around and through the hilltop village of Châteauneuf-en-Auxois, admiring the picturesque Ouche Valley that unfolded below us. Still, eating and drinking took priority. We'd even ventured off-barge, to William Frachot, a Michelin two-starred restaurant in Dijon, where we tried witty, modern takes on classic Burgundian dishes, such as a garlic mousse shielding a snail, a puréed version of a *gougère,* and roast chicken with Dijon carrots served in the smallest saucepan I've ever seen. (A word on snails: the American food writer Waverley Root noted that his compatriots "consider the eating of snails a curious custom," but Burgundy snails are the ideal sop for garlicky butter, and served with Burgundian wine, they represent a form of poetic justice. Having grown plump on the leaves of grapes, they are consumed with the juice of their former dinner as accompaniment.)

But really, we were perfectly happy on the *Amaryllis.* Neil never repeated himself; only the quantities of his delicious food were predictable. The poolside lunches were glorious; lobster accompanied by an excellent Meursault was a particular highlight. Our final dinner was a tour de force: oysters, dressed crab with Indian spices, duck with Burgundy truffle, and an incredible tower of profiteroles to finish. Jonathan also outdid himself, serving a Clos des Mouches, one of Maison Drouhin's great white wines, named for the bees, or "honey flies" (*mouches à miel*), that love the grapes, and a superb Corton *grand cru.*

As a farewell present, I'd asked Jonathan to show us something we would never find alone. He obliged, taking us, via Dijon's bustling food market, into the unglamorous grounds of a psychiatric hospital, where a tiny building shields an extraordinary sculpture. *The Well of Moses* was carved by Dutch artist Claus Sluter at the end of the 14th century, when Burgundy was a duchy at least as powerful as the neighboring kingdom of France and this now-central hospital was a monastery outside the city. Its location wasn't the greatest oddity, though: thanks to an early mistranslation of *qaran,* the Hebrew word for radiant, as *qeren,* or horned, Moses has distinct horns bulging from his forehead. It was a suitably eccentric end to a trip full of novelties. And beneath Moses, filling the well, ran the Ouche River: our last faint contact with a Burgundian waterway, as we returned reluctantly to life on land. ✚

Booking a Canal Cruise

The *Amaryllis* is one of seven fully-staffed private barges that make up the Belmond Afloat in France fleet. Rates for a six-night cruise for eight guests begin at $47,578 (or $5,947 per guest), all-inclusive. Round-trip transfers from Paris to the barge are provided. The *Amaryllis* runs between March and October. *belmond.com.*

Detail of
The Sinner,
by John Cox.

BEYOND THE SEA

Most travelers choose the Bahamas for its extraordinary beaches, but now the country's thriving art scene is poised for its own moment in the sun. JODI MINNIS reflects on how one ambitious gallery and work space is shaping the next generation of creators—herself among them.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MELISSA ALCENA

From left: Cabbage Beach, on Paradise Island in the Bahamas; John Cox, creative arts director of Baha Mar's Current Gallery & Art Center.

From left: Nassau-born photographer Nowé Harris-Smith; her work Water.

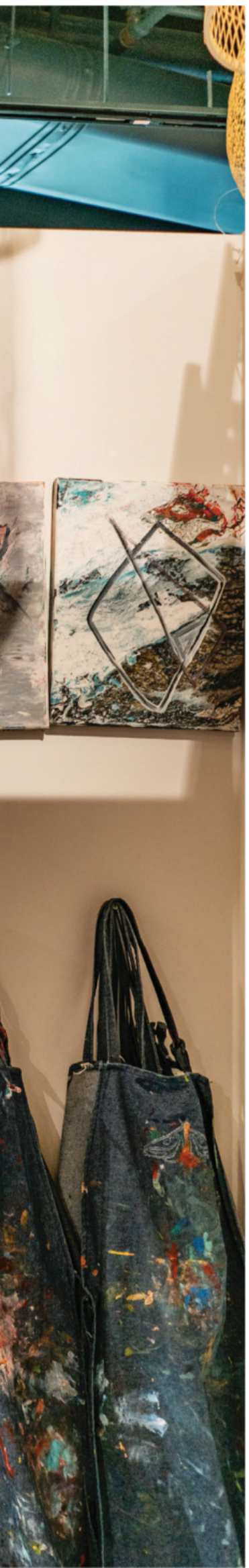
Student aprons hang below paintings by Bahamian artist Samantha Treco inside the workshop space at Current.

IN 2004, AT NINE years old, I decided I wanted to be an artist. That was the year my mother took me and my two siblings to the opening of a biennial exhibition at the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas. I remember being overwhelmed by the works on display, and by my mother's pride in her colleague Dereck Paul—an architect like her, whom we had come to support. Seeing his vibrant mixed-media portrait, *Mangra Skin,* awakened a curiosity I needed to explore. In what order had he applied the bright colors of the woman's face? Why had he placed a pomegranate on the subject's head? Shortly after we left, I announced to my mother, "I could do that too!" My mother typically surrounded us with other artists and creative people, so I held a strong confidence in the viability of this career path. She didn't hesitate to encourage me to make it a reality.

Like most aspiring artists here, I studied fine art at the College of the Bahamas—and that's when I met the NAGB's chief curator, John Cox, who would become a recurring figure in my career. I couldn't have imagined that, 15 years after that museum visit, I would have the opportunity to work with Cox at one of the country's most prestigious new institutions: Current Gallery & Art Center, where he is now creative arts director.

The Current is located at Baha Mar, a 1,000-acre luxury resort complex that looks out over the pristine waters of picturesque Goodman Bay. The artist-run initiative is a commercial gallery, but more importantly it serves as an incubator for educational and professional development. Since it opened in the summer of 2017, it's given the community a sense of how much potential there is in the Bahamian arts scene.

Between its three hotels (Grand Hyatt, Rosewood, and SLS) and its meeting spaces, Baha Mar houses the country's



largest collection of Bahamian works, with 2,500 pieces from artists based across the archipelago. As such, visitors at Baha Mar are greeted with local art and culture at every turn—from Heino Schmid's immense mixed-media pieces in the Convention Center to Dede Brown's aluminum bird sculpture in the rotunda of the SLS.

"My goal is to show a much more complex picture of who we are," Cox explained in a recent conversation. "I'm trying to present Bahamian-ness to guests in a way that is relatable, dynamic, and progressive."

From the beginning, Cox has developed experiences that are not only forward-thinking and true to the nation's spirit but also approachable to a broad range of travelers—including those who may not automatically gravitate toward painting or sculpture. The Current participates in international fairs and hosts an array of events, from poetry readings and plays to on-site concerts and classes for kids. Cox clearly feels a deep responsibility to the artists he works with. "It's important to me to allow the Bahamian arts community access to the space, as well as to opportunities for growth and visibility," he noted.

Unlike more traditional galleries, where exhibitions can last anywhere from two months to two years, the Current favors pop-ups, each lasting just a week or two, so Baha Mar guests are met with different pieces on every visit. Between presentations, the staff routinely changes out artwork within the consignment space, which means a greater number of artists can be featured.

From top: At the End of the Day *by June Collie; the artist in front of her mural* Mindfulness.

BAHAMIAN ART HAS BEEN historically underrepresented on the global stage. That's partially because we often struggle to cohesively articulate our identity in a contemporary way, but also because the world still sees the Bahamas through the lens of "sun, sand, and sea." While those elements have undoubtedly shaped our country, the roots of our culture run much broader and deeper.

Over the past decade, there's been a movement to showcase a more nuanced side of the Bahamas. In 2014, the nonprofit Creative Nassau helped establish Nassau as a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts, which sparked island-wide conversations about the importance of the Orange Economy, a term used to describe a country's artistic industries. Since tourism is our main economic engine, bringing in about half of the country's GDP, how could we use the Orange Economy to enhance the way visitors experience Bahamian culture?

The Current has been a key force in making this idea a reality—in no small part through its three-month artists' residencies. I applied in December 2019 and began the following January, with the intention of expanding on the ideas of exoticism, home, and Black Americana that I had started exploring as a student. Though the residency was cut short by the pandemic, I completed a collection of 12 oil paintings, relief prints, and sculptures. Perhaps more importantly, I learned the value of working in a sustained community and having a regimented artistic practice.

Other Bahamian artists who have participated in the Current's residency program have also been profoundly impacted by the experience. "Listening to how Bahamians and guests from all over the world viewed my work was energizing, and it encouraged me to express new ideas without fear of ridicule," said muralist June Collie, an April 2019 artist-in-residence whose painted stools depicting curvaceous Black women can still be seen in the gallery.

Nowé Harris-Smith, a street photographer who focuses on the ideas of masculinity and otherness, has been able to use the Current as both a trial run and a launchpad. "It was the first time I exhibited my photography on a wider scale," she said of her show, "Aperture." "It gave me the courage to continue photographing subjects in my own unique way."

Painter and songwriter Navarro Newton's experience drives home just how wide-ranging the opportunities are. Natascha Vazquez, the Current's former curatorial

Cox's sculpture Blessed Redeemer *hangs inside the Current, in front of his painting* Aunt Ethel Meets the Kennedys.

manager, came across his abstract mixed-media paintings during the gallery's rolling consignment call. With about 40 pieces completed, Newton met with Vazquez to discuss the work in person, and their conversation blossomed into "Synesthesia," an exhibition that ran for a week last February.

Two days after the opening, Newton joined Warp Trio, an internationally acclaimed contemporary classical group from the U.S., to perform two of his original songs at the gallery. The collaboration speaks directly to Cox's vision for the future of the Current. "The evolution for me, in terms of programming, is really trying to get Baha Mar to create dynamic connections to other cultural and artistic institutions, like universities and schools," he explained.

AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC swept the world last winter, lockdowns meant the Current was forced to cancel my show (and many other events). Still, our community has remained resilient. Musicians have held virtual concerts. DJs have hosted livestreamed parties. Actors have rehearsed and recorded plays via Zoom. Bahamian artisans even launched digital marketplaces to sell their work.

Last spring, the government of the Bahamas assembled an Economic Recovery Committee that has an Orange Economy Subcommittee. The inclusion of the creative industries is a testament to the work of institutions like the Current and the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas and organizations like Creative Nassau—all of which recognize the arts can be just as lucrative as our "sun, sand, and sea."

The magic of the Current is that it shows culture does not have to be fabricated, just highlighted, and that the people who make it happen should be given resources to help them evolve. Cox points out that access and community are necessary for any industry within a small developing island nation, and I agree—those factors allow someone like me to succeed. Although he and his team present a diverse depiction of Bahamian identity within the space itself, they leave room for visitors' curiosity. Each time I return, I wonder if any nine-year-olds will come through Baha Mar, see an artwork, and feel the same sense of awakening I did. ✚

At press time, Baha Mar (bahamar.com) plans to reopen in phases, beginning with the Grand Hyatt and the Current on December 17. In addition to welcoming hotel guests back into the gallery and studio space, the Current will host private outdoor workshops, lectures, and art classes. The gallery will also be launching an e-commerce store (bahamar.com/art) to sell art and provide curatorial services.

From top: Painter Navarro Newton in his home studio; Newton's work Month, Moon, Man and the Continuum.

SAILING THE ISLANDS OF EASTERN INDONESIA, **SAKI KNAFO** FINDS NATURE AT ITS MOST

PRISTINE—AND A SURPRISING HISTORY THAT TODAY RESONATES MORE THAN EVER.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROL SACHS

YOU PROBABLY haven't heard of them. You almost certainly wouldn't be able to find them on a map. But there's a case to be made that eastern Indonesia's tiny Banda Islands—or the Spice Islands, as they were once known in the West—have done more to shape the last 500 years of human history than any other place on earth. I'll come right out and say it: the Banda Islands are the birthplace of modern capitalism. Whatever you think of the economic system that rules the world and likely your life, you may find it intriguing to learn that it could have originated about 600 miles north of Australia, on a cluster of palm-fringed volcanic formations smack in the middle of an azure sea—a place that could hardly feel more distant from our overcrowded, hyperconnected centers of commerce.

A dinghy flanks the Aqua Blu, *off Raja Ampat, in eastern Indonesia. Opposite: Francesco and Birgit Galli Zugaro, owners of Aqua Expeditions.*

My trip to see them began, as all my trips do, in the throbbing heart of capitalism itself. In late 2019—mere months before the pandemic stopped the world—I flew from New York to Hong Kong, and from Hong Kong to Bali, and then from Bali to a town called Maumere, on the eastern Indonesian island of Flores. There I availed myself of one of the world's extravagant pleasures—a luxury cruise.

As I stepped onto the long-range explorer yacht with the other passengers, a handsome man in sunglasses, his silvery hair swept back, politely invited us to join him in taking off our shoes. From his faint accent it sounded like he might be from Italy. I later found out he had lived not only in Rome but also in Zurich, Bonn, Cyprus, Boston, London, Ecuador, Peru, Singapore, and possibly a few other places that I'm forgetting. He introduced himself as Francesco Galli Zugaro, the adventurer-entrepreneur behind Aqua Expeditions, the cruise line that owns and operates the vessel. His company has been a leader when it comes to small-scale river cruises, with itineraries along the Mekong in Southeast Asia. His *Aqua Nera* was launched last year and sails the Peruvian Amazon. He said he would be accompanying us on the voyage with his wife, Birgit, the company's guest experiences director.

The debut of the boat, *Aqua Blu,* is Galli Zugaro's first foray into ocean cruising. It has made visiting this remote part of Asia possible without the challenges of organizing a private charter (though you can do that, too—the *Aqua Blu* can accommodate parties of up to 30 people, perfect for those who want privacy). Built as a survey vessel for the British Royal Navy, it has since been appointed with four teak decks, 15 plush carpeted suites, and a bar with an Italian parquet floor.

On the first evening of the voyage, in a salon decorated with mementos from the Galli Zugaros' travels in Southeast Asia and Oceania—a golden seated Buddha from Thailand, a feathered headdress from New Guinea—Galli Zugaro reminded us that this was the *Aqua Blu*'s inaugural cruise, as well as the first time any vessel of its kind would test its strength against the notoriously powerful currents of eastern Indonesia's wide-open waters. Most tourists who had previously sailed these seas had either chartered their own yachts or secured berths in a *palari,* the traditional wooden schooner. "You've obviously chosen this departure," Galli Zugaro said, "because the spirit of adventure lives within you."

The adventure would span a 600-mile stretch of a nation composed of 17,508 islands—an itinerary possible only by cruise. We'd begin by heading east along the remote Southeast Moluccas, sometimes called the Forgotten Islands. We would then cut across one of the world's deepest seas before turning north toward Raja Ampat, the heart of the Coral Triangle, where there are more marine species than anywhere else on earth. Along the way, we would stop in the Banda Islands. From the 15th to mid-17th centuries, in the Age of Exploration, they were renowned among Europe's mariners as the source of nutmeg and mace, spices that commanded obscenely high prices, in part because they grew only here.

Clockwise from top left: A soup course on the Aqua Blu*; local architecture on Banda Neira; swimming off Banda Neira; a bushel of nutmeg; a flame tree on Alor Island.*

We would have it a little easier than the men who risked dysentery and starvation to load their ships with those delectable treasures centuries ago. In our bathrooms, the towels were anointed with a sweet and woody fragrance that Birgit and the ship's exacting decorator had spent a day concocting with a perfumer in Bali. There would be no hardships in the dining room, either. The meals were served on custom-made plates adorned with paintings of Wallace's flying frogs, a creature named for Alfred Russel Wallace, the British naturalist who, independently of Darwin, conceived of the theory of evolution in eastern Indonesia's species-rich forests. The menu evoked the wide-ranging cuisines of the old spice route, which once stretched from the port cities of the Mediterranean to the rural islands we'd soon be exploring: Balinese-style suckling pig with a minty salad of sweet corn and palm hearts, succulent lamb shoulder with a vibrant tabbouleh, and translucent sashimi—an improvised addition, which appeared on our plates a few hours after fishermen pulled up alongside the yacht to offer their catch of tuna.

Most days, we would board the tenders in the morning and again in the afternoon to snorkel or dive around the nearby reefs. Floating face-down in the shallows, I could watch butterfly fish and parrotfish, fish named for angels and trumpets and clowns, flickering through the coppery cities of coral beneath my nose. Kicking out beyond the reef's sheer edge, I'd feel the churning of my thoughts subside as I gazed down into the vortex of blue, waiting for a big turtle or a school of barracuda to come gliding up from the depths.

Every two or three days, we'd deviate from this hypnotic routine to visit one of the villages along the route. One morning, we awoke to find ourselves anchored about a hundred yards off the shore of an island consisting of a pair of lush green peaks. From the taller peak rose a ribbon of smoke. We were looking at Mount Serua, one of the most active volcanoes in the region, on perhaps the most isolated of all the Forgotten Islands. According to Galli Zugaro, few if any other cruise vessels in eastern Indonesia would have spared the time to stop alongside it.

For the most part, the trip had been so smooth that I almost forgot I was on a boat, but I'd felt the rise and fall of the swells the night before. We'd been crossing the abyss of the Banda Sea—four miles at its deepest point. The 12-hour voyage was the longest crossing of the trip. Now the water was calm again, and a small skiff was puttering across the span of indigo between the island and our vessel. Two men and a boy pulled up to the stern, and some of the Indonesian crew members went down to ask if they would let us take a look at their village. After a brief exchange, a box was filled with goods from the *Aqua Blu* kitchen: instant ramen, several bags of sugar and coffee and rice, a loaf of bread, and a jar of jam.

Clockwise from top: Kayaking through a cave on the coast of Raja Ampat; stingless jellyfish in a saltwater lake on Raja Ampat; cocktail hour for Aqua Blu *passengers on a beach on Banda Neira.*

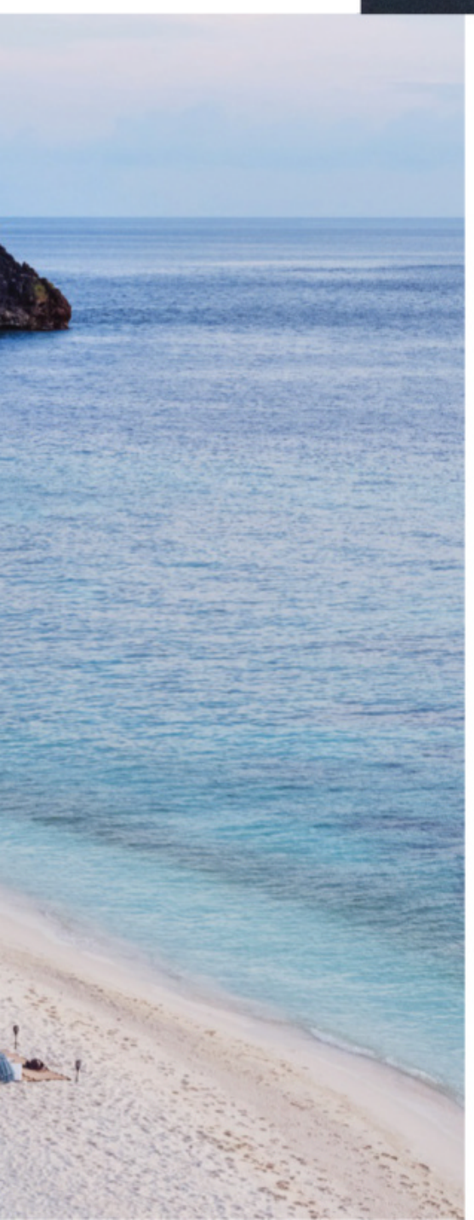
Climbing out of the tenders onto the rocky beach, we were greeted by a lanky man in a Nike cap. "This is the chief of the village," said one of our scuba guides, Kaz Kazzuaeni, doing double duty as an interpreter. "He said it must be that God has guided us to come here." The man turned to face the slope of the volcano and moved his lips in silence for a minute or two—"a prayer to ancestors to get permission for visitors." Then he led us up a path through the vine-wrapped trees toward the village. According to Kazzuaeni, the man said we were the first passersby ever to come ashore.

The village of Waru is perched about 1,300 feet above the sea. Our host said the 60 families who live there grow nutmeg and cloves much as their grandparents did before them. Their ancestors had established the village more than two centuries ago. Before that, he said, they lived in caves. The houses are small, with rusty tin roofs, but the Christian church is an airy building of bone-white stucco with turquoise trim and a pale blue steeple. Inside, a white tin rooster sat atop the feathery branches of a Christmas tree. I wandered back outside into the glare of the sun and stood at the edge of a soaring overlook. The sparkling sea stretched to the horizon. Swifts turned and swooped in the air, and unseen birds filled the jungle behind me with their calls.

This was one of a number of moments when Galli Zugaro delivered what he called "the wow factor." Another came a couple of days later, when we spotted a dolphin as we were taking the tenders out to a reef for a dive. Slowly we realized we were approaching not one or a few but hundreds of them, their shiny dark bodies cresting and dipping in perfectly synchronized rows of three and four. Soon they were flinging themselves into the air all around the boat, and then they were racing beneath us, shooting from the port side to the starboard just beneath the bow. Our driver cut the engine, and we slipped over the gunwales and into the water, but the dolphins weren't interested in sticking around to find out what we would do next. Listening under the surface of the water, I could hear them chattering and clicking as they sped out of sight.

In the days to come, we'd sail through the sun-dazzled channels of Raja Ampat, a jumble

ILLUSTRATION BY MAY PARSEY



of jungle-clad limestone islands that had been sculpted into fantastical shapes by the tides. We'd see a sperm whale breaching just off the boat, and we'd swim in a salt lake teeming with a rare kind of jellyfish, their stingless bodies bouncing off our skin. But the climax of the journey came on the day we first caught sight of the Banda Islands, once among the most sought-after on the planet.

When Columbus set out from Spain in 1492, he was hoping to find not just the East Indies generally, but those nine specific specks of land. And Ferdinand Magellan reportedly had the same goal in mind in **(Continued on page 102)**

Sailing the Spice Islands

Aqua Expeditions offers 12-day sailings on the *Aqua Blu* between the Banda (Spice) Islands in March, October, and November. Exact routes vary, but the closest itinerary to the one taken by the author leaves in March, both this year and in 2022. For a totally personalized experience and itinerary, the *Aqua Blu* can be chartered independently to sail around the region. *aquaexpeditions.com; itineraries from $12,800 per person, all-inclusive; yacht charter from $290,000 for seven days, all-inclusive.*

In Indonesia, Aqua Expeditions can arrange regional flights that will take you from Bali or Jakarta to Flores or Ambon, where you'll board the yacht.

The company recently launched a partnership with **Nihi Sumba**, a resort known for its private-island vibe and world-class surfing. Included is a four-night charter (for up to 30 people) on the *Aqua Blu,* with stops for hiking, mountain biking, and diving, followed by three nights at Nihi Sumba. *From $281,000, all-inclusive.*

Aqua Expeditions' Aqua Blu *off the coast of Serua Island, Indonesia.*

If the Oceans Are Calling...

After a lost year, cruise lines are pulling out all the stops. **BY FRAN GOLDEN**

WE'RE ALL ANXIOUS to get back to sea. The proof? When Royal Caribbean put out a Facebook call for volunteers to help test out the line's stringent new COVID-19 protocols, more than 100,000 cooped-up explorers raised their digital hands. So even as cruise companies continue to cancel trips as they try to navigate the pandemic, consumers, it seems, can't wait to go.

"Travelers are picking up their dreams and trying to make them reality as fast as possible," says Barbara Muckermann, chief marketing officer of Silversea Cruises.

Much remains uncertain for cruising in the coming months, but the industry has used last year's unprecedented pause to prepare for a grand return. Here are four promising developments to watch.

NEW SHIPS FINALLY ARRIVE

The pandemic slowed both the delivery and the debuts of new vessels. But this April, at the very start of European yachting season, the first ship from the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, the 298-passenger *Evrima,* is scheduled to make its long-awaited first trip. Regent's *Seven Seas Splendor* will also sail the Mediterranean this year.

Guests will get to enjoy Virgin Voyages' new 2,770-passenger, adults-only *Scarlet Lady*—and its sister ship, *Valiant Lady,* due later this year. Silversea has three ships slated to make their inaugural trips in 2021.

The new expedition line Atlas Ocean Voyages plans to launch its first ship, the 196-passenger *World Navigator,* with all-inclusive fares that cover even emergency

Aboard the Aqua Blu, *near the port city of Sorong, Indonesia.*

medical-evacuation insurance. Celebrity Cruises will unveil the 2,918-passenger *Celebrity Apex*—a sister to the well-regarded *Celebrity Edge*—along with new all-inclusive pricing across the fleet. And Carnival Cruise Lines will make a splash with its 5,282-passenger *Mardi Gras,* complete with an onboard roller coaster, a first for the industry. The *Mardi Gras* will also be Carnival Corporation's fourth ship to run on cleaner-burning liquefied natural gas.

ALASKA BOUNCES BACK

Around 1.3 million cruisers had to cancel their plans to visit the state in 2020. For those who want to try again this year, there are new options: Lindblad Expeditions plans to send five ships to Alaska in 2021. Itineraries will include September sailings that will spend four days in British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest, the habitat of the elusive white spirit bear.

THE ARCTIC STAYS COOL

Expedition cruises were surging in popularity before the pandemic and will continue to be big for years to come, says Robin West, who heads expeditions for the luxury line Seabourn. The company's newest vessel, the polar-class, 264-passenger *Seabourn Venture,* will set off on 12- and 14-day itineraries along the coast of Norway this December. West says he can "practically guarantee" sightings of the northern lights—though guests may have to suffer a late-night wake-up call in order to admire the spectacle, he jokes.

LUXURY TRIPS GO OVER THE TOP

Some gung-ho travelers are making up for lost time by making ambitious bookings for the future. When Regent Seven Seas Cruises opened reservations on a 143-day, six-continent journey aboard the 700-passenger *Seven Seas Mariner,* all 60 of the luxury suites were gone within hours—at prices starting at $107,499 per person. Meanwhile, Oceania Cruises says its 2022 European season is already the best in company history, with one in three guests booking a first-ever cruise for next summer.

Other lines are offering tons of privacy. In the Galápagos, Ecoventura has two 20-passenger ships available for full buyouts for $169,000 a week. And AmaWaterways has put its entire 25-vessel fleet up for charter, at rates from $365,000 for 12 nights on the Zambezi—the ultimate onboard bubble. ✚

The view from a cabin on the Aqua Blu.

Short but Sweet

Condensed cruises can still pack a punch with stops at some of the world's most exciting ports—even on itineraries of just a few days. **BY PAUL BRADY**

Cruise lines are planning a comeback this year, after rethinking safety protocols and collaborating with the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention on ways to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on board. Masks and social distancing will be standard practice, and the companies are working toward onboard bubbles. Guests will only be allowed to go on ship-sponsored shore excursions and will have to submit to frequent testing.

Helping the cause is a shift toward shorter sailings, with many 2021 trips slated to last a week or less. But these new micro-itineraries don't skimp on the cultural sites or unforgettable ports of call.

Ponant *(en.ponant.com),* for example, will offer a four-night trip in August, sailing from Valletta, Malta, to Venice, with stops in Kotor, Montenegro, and Dubrovnik, Croatia. Thanks to a new partnership with the Louvre, curators from the museum will be aboard a July 13–20 sail through Greece's Cycladic islands, offering expert talks.

Azamara *(azamara.com)* is also focusing on Greece, with six- and seven-night round trips out of Piraeus, the cruise port for Athens. These itineraries pack in islands including Mykonos, Patmos, and Santorini, as well as a stop at Ephesus, in Turkey.

After canceling its Alaska cruises for 2020, **Holland America** *(hollandamerica.com)* is preparing for a big return. This year, the line will add seven-day trips between Vancouver and Whittier, on Prince William Sound, that include visits to Juneau and Ketchikan.

The newest **Silversea** *(silversea.com)* ship, the *Silver Moon,* is set to make its debut in the Mediterranean this year. A series of six-night trips between Barcelona and Lisbon, scheduled for May and August, will focus on Iberian food and wine, with excursions dedicated to cava, tapas, and sherry.

Windstar *(windstarcruises.com)* will also call at ports in Spain, with an October sailing aboard the *Wind Star* from Rome to Barcelona that visits both Mallorca and Menorca, as well as Corsica and Elba—all in just six days.

▲

From left: Guava and sweet cheese turnovers from Back in the Day Bakery in Savannah, Georgia; Spanish-moss-covered oak trees at Morning Glory Homestead Farm on St. Helena Island, South Carolina.

HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

▲ *From left: The Grey, in Savannah, helmed by chef Mashama Bailey; Morning Glory's owner, Tony Jones, holds a palm berry picked on his farm.*

Along the South Carolina and Georgia coasts, the Gullah-Geechee community guards a unique food culture born from Central and West African roots. **MICHAEL W. TWITTY** embarks on a pilgrimage to explore how the past informs the region's modern-day chefs, farmers, and culinary custodians.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY OLIVIA RAE JAMES

FOR SOME VISITORS, IT'S THE SPANISH MOSS

hanging from the trees. It's romantic, haunting—even mystical, they say. Some travelers go to the Lowcountry, and to the neighboring Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, for the historic sites—the plantations and battlegrounds—or to play a round on the golf courses that many have become. Others go for the food: shrimp and grits; red rice; crab boiled with corn; potatoes and sausage that form a concoction known as Frogmore stew. I went for the Gullah-Geechee people who created this food, for their stories and traditions.

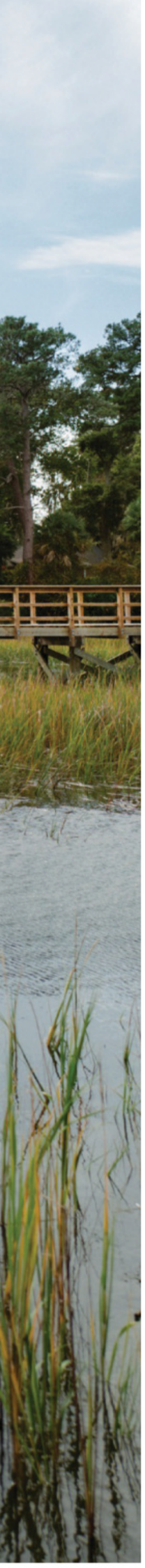
It just so happens they are part of my story, too.

This journey was a homecoming, as well as a personal renewal. The trips I'd taken before were about the dead. This one was about the living. I am a culinary historian turned culinary tourist. My purpose is to find where the food of the Gullah-Geechee people is and where it's going—a task that has become far more complicated since the spring, when the pandemic arrived on these shores.

Centuries ago, coastal Georgia and South Carolina was the landing place for many of the enslaved Africans brought to America to work on plantations. On the coast grew a blend of crops, but mainly indigo and rice (and more rice, and after that, even more rice). Along the tidal creeks and rivers, rice was queen, and on the islands, silky, fragile Sea Island cotton reigned, keeping the cosmopolitan worlds of Charleston and Savannah, and their white gentry, moving.

Over time, the enslaved people of this region developed a cuisine of their own—one informed by their roots in West and Central Africa, but brought to life by the bountiful produce of the Lowcountry. Today, food is one of the few arenas where locals let their guard down, and cultural expression is as unabashed and as loud as you desire. This is where part of the story of Southern hospitality was born. As sure as you will sip pineapple iced tea, the Gullah-Geechee people are generous and obliging. There is an eagerness to prove that the food is special, that it has a history, and that it is a deeply important American cuisine. It has retained its African spirit despite the influence of British, German, French Huguenot, Sephardic Jewish, and Native American communities that, over

▲ *A pier sits over the marshy landscape of Country Club Creek in Savannah.*



the course of centuries, informed Lowcountry cuisine and culture.

Friends from my current home, Maryland—Baltimore-based chefs David and Tonya Thomas, who are husband and wife—rode with me on this journey, but my chef-brother Benjamin "BJ" Dennis IV was my travel planner. BJ and I spent a few days crafting my stops—St. Helena Island, North Charleston and Charleston, Johns Island, Daufuskie Island, and Savannah. I met BJ, a Charleston native, a decade ago, when I did a series of talks and events on the cuisine of enslaved Africans at the city's Magnolia Plantation, along the Ashley River. He has a reputation as a gatekeeper, but he's more storyteller than anything. He wants to re-create the journey of the Gullah-Geechee through his pots. "Everybody needs to know that we're not magical," he said. "We're just a people trying to survive. We know we special. The world knows we special. We just don't agree with outsiders on what that *special* means."

Passionate about traditional dishes and ingredients, BJ has been reconnecting me to my Gullah-Geechee heritage for more than a decade.

▲ *Danielle and Mark Green, owners of Mother Smokin' Good barbecue truck, in North Charleston. Left, from top: Pork chops, yams, collard greens, mac and cheese, and red rice at Nigel's Good Food; Tony Jones at Morning Glory Homestead Farm; a menu at Mother Smokin' Good.*


BAKED GOOD
HOURS
FRI-SAT-SUN

▲ *The ruins of St. Helena's Chapel of Ease, built in 1740. Opposite, from far left: Owner Cheryl Day, of Back in the Day Bakery, at her pickup window; the namesake dish at Shrimp & Grits in North Charleston; chef BJ Dennis near his home in Charleston.*

He caters events and hosts pop-up dinners throughout South Carolina, taking his guests beyond shrimp and grits. "Try this," with BJ, means fresh fruit from the yellowish-orange jelly palm, or a bite of conch (technically, Northern whelk) served with a white gravy over rice, or shredded okra leaves alongside pot-roasted venison. He comes by this knowledge honestly and sincerely: he learned to forage with his grandparents, and he makes his rounds with the culinary elders of the region—farmers, fishermen, oystermen and crabbers and shrimpers. They are the people who do more than just produce. They are the people who know.

Gullah-Geechee language used to be known as "baby talk," considered a confused adaptation of old-world English. But in our slightly more enlightened era, it's become appreciated as a tongue all its own, partly based on West African grammar and vocabulary. Traditional Gullah-Geechee music crossed over into the mainstream during the Civil Rights era. This included the famous folk hymn, "Kumbaya," and the essential spiritual ritual, the Shout, a counterclockwise dance that is key to religious expression and is accompanied by percussive stomping and clapping, which further differentiated the Gullah-Geechee in the eyes of outsiders. Later, tourists began picking up palmetto-leaf roses and sweetgrass baskets woven by Gullah-Geechee artisans, which have become must-have American folk crafts. Others have gone to cry at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, laying flowers in memory of the "Charleston Nine"—Black victims of the mass shooting in 2015.

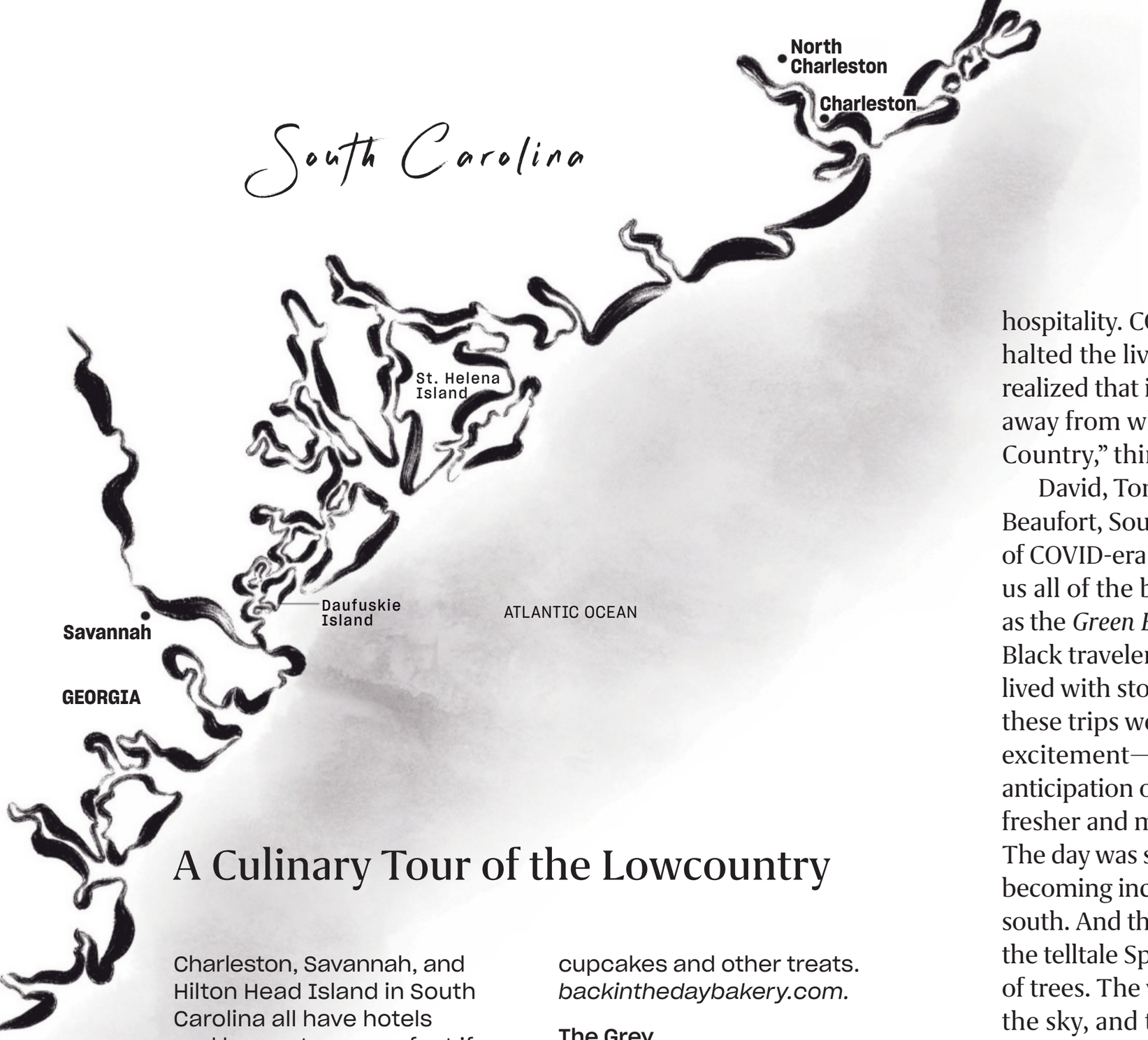
To put it another way, Gullah-Geechee folks are a quiet people with a loud reputation. But most Gullah-Geechee have no interest in being performative or entertaining. They don't exist to demonstrate what makes them special. They are well aware that, like many traditional American cultures, theirs is being forced to morph or die. The challenges to Gullah-Geechee life have been legion: from hurricanes that destroyed the plantation economy and race riots in 1919 to the resulting Great Migration that siphoned many to the Northeast and the theft and gentrification of Gullah-Geechee farmsteads. Trust and respect have greater capital in this region than other places.

FOOD IS ONE OF THE FEW ARENAS WHERE CULTURAL EXPRESSION IS AS UNABASHED AS YOU DESIRE.

SOMETIME IN THE 1760S, a woman from the Mende community in Sierra Leone disembarked from a slave ship in Charleston harbor. Sold at auction in a terrifying practice called "the scramble," where buyers rushed in and grabbed whatever enslaved chattel they chose, the woman, who had inherited centuries of knowledge about rice, cotton, and indigo growing and harvesting, became someone's property. She had a daughter, and that daughter had a daughter and named her Nora. Nora begat Hester, Hester had Josephine, Josephine had Mary, Mary had Hazel, and Hazel had Pat. And Pat, a child of the baby boom, had a Gen Xer, and that Gen Xer is me.

Think of this as my American story. In the Gullah-Geechee world there are *come ya*s and there are *been ya*s (a *come ya* is a newcomer, and a *been ya* is a native). I am definitely a *come ya*. But in the eyes of BJ and others, I am a returnee, a descendant of Gullah-Geechee people with roots in the areas around Charleston; Savannah; Wilmington, North Carolina; and Georgetown, South Carolina. The remarkable thing about the Gullah-Geechee is that the isolation and insularity of those who remained preserved a culture from ancient West and Central Africa. In the process, it encapsulated the multiple contradictions and the sweeping narrative of exile on the southeastern seaboard of America.

There is a through line that runs from Africa to the Lowcountry's fields of shimmering rice to today. I wanted to reacquaint myself with all of it. In the middle of the worst pandemic in a hundred years, I went to find out how Gullah-Geechee food culture is surviving despite the near collapse of American restaurants and



hospitality. COVID-19 has dampened but not halted the lives of Lowcountry chefs. I quickly realized that in the many months I had been away from what I affectionately call "the Old Country," things had changed.

David, Tonya, and I drove south on I-95 to Beaufort, South Carolina, a car our chosen mode of COVID-era travel. The road trip reminded us all of the bad old days of what was known as the *Green Book,* which served as a guide to Black travelers in the age of Jim Crow. All of us lived with stories from parents of the time when these trips were two-thirds fear and one-third excitement—the latter of which came from anticipation of the food that could be enjoyed in fresher and more flavorful ways than back home. The day was sunny and sparkling, with the air becoming increasingly humid as we drove farther south. And then like a spell, out of nowhere, the telltale Spanish moss appeared on the limbs of trees. The water around us grew and mirrored the sky, and the smell of paper mill and salt marsh announced that we were home.

A Culinary Tour of the Lowcountry

Charleston, Savannah, and Hilton Head Island in South Carolina all have hotels and homestays—perfect if you prefer a kitchen for cooking with market finds.

St. Helena Island

Bradley Seafood Market
This tiny spot sells the catch of the day—and the region's best shrimp. *1452 Sea Island Pkwy.; 843-838-2924.*

Morning Glory Homestead Farm
Visit this 12-acre farm to learn about sustainable agriculture. *morninggloryhomestead.com.*

Bluffton

Mother Smokin' Good
Check Instagram for the location of this roving barbecue truck. *@mother_smoking_good.*

Red Stripes
A Caribbean-Lowcountry fusion restaurant known for its jerk chicken. *redstripessc.com; entrées $12–$22.*

Daufuskie Island

Sallie Ann Authentic Gullah Tour
The island's oyster trade is a key part of this historical bus tour. *843-686-2227.*

Savannah

Back in the Day Bakery
A place for outstanding cupcakes and other treats. *backinthedaybakery.com.*

The Grey
Modern Southern cuisine in an Art Deco former bus station. *thegreyrestaurant.com; prix fixe from $65.*

Vic's on the River
This fine-dining restaurant is housed in a 19th-century warehouse. *vicsontheriver.com; entrées $15–$30.*

North Charleston

My Three Sons
You can't go wrong with the red rice and smothered pork chops. *mythreesonsofcharleston.com; entrées $12–$20.*

Nana's Seafood & Soul
The garlic crab with shrimp is a must-try. *nanasseafoodsoul.com; entrées $9–$20.*

Nigel's Good Food
Don't miss the signature stewed turkey wings. *nigelsgoodfood.com; entrées $10–$19.*

Shrimp & Grits
Famous for cheddar grits with salmon or garlic shrimp. *shrimpandgritscafe.com; entrées $9–$13.*

Johns Island

Joseph Fields Farm
Organic fruit and vegetables grown on 50 idyllic acres. *josephfieldsfarm.com.*

ILLUSTRATION BY MAY PARSEY

▲ *The Art Deco exterior of the Grey, a former bus depot built in 1938.*

◂ *From top: Lorraine Smalls, owner of North Charleston's My Three Sons, with Antwan, one of her sons; grilled octopus with feta, tomatoes, and olives at Vic's on the River, in Savannah.*

Our first morning in St. Helena was spent at Morning Glory Homestead Farm, a small agro- and ecotourism space run by farmers Tony and Belinda Jones. The land was once part of a larger cotton plantation that Tony's family had lived on since 1862. He and his wife started in the egg and poultry business. Heritage-breed turkeys, guinea fowl, chickens, and ducks pranced around, keeping the bugs down as they moved past the bushes of basil out front. Melinda told me, "You can camp out here, get a home-cooked meal over an open fire—shrimp and okra, corn bread, crowder peas, and rice." It's served with some of their delicious teas, which are flavored with herbs, limes, and oranges grown on the property. The vegetables are as fresh as you can get—sweet bell peppers, lacinato kale, heirloom collards, and bitter melon, to name a few.

I've been to many places like this in search of the roots of Black culture, and to bear witness to environments where Black history occurred. What amazes me is that many of them are quiet and lonely, and carry no sign of the enormity of their significance. Dungeons on the coast of West Africa, plantation kitchens, places where men and women ran away from bondage to take up arms for their freedom. Sites of Civil Rights resistance, places of trauma and triumph—all remarkably sleepy. But you'll learn quickly, driving through the Lowcountry, that this region and its people are the antithesis of that, especially when it comes to food.

We drove south to Bluffton, where we stopped at a fantastic little restaurant named Red Stripes. It's run by a couple, Lakesha and Ezron Daley. He is from Kingston, Jamaica, and she is from Daufuskie Island, South Carolina, and together they bring two parts of the African diaspora together. The dishes—from jerk chicken pot stickers to brown-stew shrimp and lobster to deviled crab and rice—reveal the range of flavors found in the region's islands.

There was also Mother Smokin' Good, a food truck operated by Danielle and Mark Green, with one of the best barbecue experiences I have ever had. They move their trailer and grill across the area, selling pork ribs, beef ribs, beef brisket, and chicken and turkey breast. Green's Carolina mustard barbecue sauce is the perfect way to enjoy the juicy, well-seasoned meat he prepares. The truck is to be stalked more than followed, as it can be hard to pin down its exact location on any given day.

Our next stop was Daufuskie Island, which is isolated and rustic. On the ferry ride over, we saw dolphins leap into the fresh salt air. Sea Island cotton once flourished on Daufuskie, but it's now a resort getaway dotted with small Black homesteads, which chef Sallie Ann Robinson, my friend and mentor, is trying to preserve. Her Authentic Gullah Tour bus regularly takes a dozen or so lucky visitors on an hours-long journey to explore the stories told in her cookbooks. (Now, of course, the tours are socially distanced and extra sanitary measures are in place on the bus.) The proceeds support her effort to save the land belonging to the remaining Black families. If you are lucky, she will treat you to a few of her favorite dishes—blackberry dumplings, fried rabbit, deviled crab in the shell. Just don't ask her to make okra. Go on the tour, and she will tell you why.

A few other things you'll learn from Robinson: beginning in the late 1500s, Gullah-Geechee people were spread from southeastern North Carolina to (Continued on page 103)

(Indonesia, continued from page 89)

1519, when he launched his ill-fated expedition to circumnavigate the globe (one out of the five ships made it, but not before Magellan was killed in the Philippines by warriors who refused to convert to Christianity). For two centuries, the Netherlands, Portugal, and England fought over the islands, with the Dutch acquiring one of them from the English in exchange for a small backwater by the name of Manhattan. Now, as the yacht slipped into the harbor, I could make out the archways and terra-cotta roofs of Banda Neira, formerly the hub of the global trade in nutmeg.

Following a guide through the old colonial town, we passed a grand hotel that had fallen into disrepair, its custard-yellow paint cracking and peeling. Farther down the road, spiders the size of mice crouched on strands of cobweb suspended from the balconies, and a pair of 17th-century cannons lay neglected on the side of the street. It is the sort of town that visitors might idealize as "faded," though I doubt most people who live there think of it that way. The market was busy, with rows of gleaming skipjack and grouper and bins filled with pandan leaves and chiles. The homes had been painted in arresting shades of lime and lemon, indigo and salmon.

In the museum, while my fellow passengers were examining the coins and weaponry of the archipelago's colonizers, I noticed one of the cruise's snorkeling guides, an Indonesian from Sulawesi named Refli, studying a gruesome painting. It showed a band of Japanese mercenaries butchering dozens of native people while a Dutch commander looked on approvingly. "It's very sad," Refli said, "but good to know the history."

THE STORY OF the Banda Islands' colonization is about as dark as histories get. In 1621, a fleet of ships belonging to the Dutch East India Company arrived. Within two months, the islands were under Dutch control and as many as 14,000 of the 15,000 original inhabitants had been deported, enslaved, or killed. A statue of Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the officer of the Dutch East India Company who presided over the slaughter, still stands in his birthplace of Hoorn in the Netherlands. But in the abandoned mansion he built in Banda Neira, the only remnant of his tenure is a suicide note scratched into a windowpane by the homesick Frenchman who cooked his meals. No other evidence of habitation remains. After the Indonesians won independence from the Dutch, in 1949, they threw every last stick of furniture away.

In an orchard on the outskirts of town, we finally laid our eyes on the literal seed of all the greed and terror of that era. At one of the islands' few surviving nutmeg plantations, we watched a guide use a special basket at the end of a long handle to pick a golden fruit. He sliced the flesh with the tip of his machete to reveal a shriveled brown nut wrapped in crimson threads of mace. Because of its ability to keep meat from going bad and its purported power to ward off the plague, the spice derived from that nut once fetched higher prices in Europe than gold. Once the Dutch East India Company took control of the Banda Islands and started importing nutmeg, the sudden infusion of all that profit into the cities of the West would change the course of history. As Charles Corn wrote in *Scents of Eden: A Narrative of the Spice Trade,* it "spawned a new age of revolutionary economics based on credit, the rise of a rudimentary banking system, and ultimately free enterprise." In other words, the blood-soaked soil of the Banda Islands, a place so little-known in the West today that some cartographers don't even bother to include it in their atlases, was where modern capitalism took root.

Around five o'clock that evening, as the heat began to loosen its grip, we climbed a candlelit staircase to the top of a massive pentagonal fortress built by the Dutch. The young Balinese men who had been serving our drinks on the cruise had set up a bar on the ramparts just for us. I ordered a gin and tonic, walked over to the crenellated parapet, and watched the gold-fringed clouds floating over the harbor. About four hundred years ago, a succession of Dutchmen had presumably stood where I was standing, aiming their muskets through the notch where I was resting my cocktail. I had to figure I was there at least in part because of them. If they hadn't seized this land and shipped its bounty overseas, giving rise to a whole new economic system that would enrich the nations of the West, the currents of history might have never aligned to allow a lucky bunch of Europeans and Americans to tour this beautiful part of the world on a yacht. I finished my drink, had another, and then we all went back to the *Aqua Blu* to watch the sunset. The roof of clouds was stained purple and so was the sea, and far away, on the wide horizon, the sun glowed like the golden fruit that changed the world. ✚

Content in this issue was produced with assistance from Aqua Expeditions; Belmond Afloat in France; Destination Great Barrier Island; and Tourism New Zealand.

(Lowcountry food, continued from page 101)

northeastern Florida, but the heart of the Gullah-Geechee corridor is coastal South Carolina and Georgia. Successive waves of exposure to the rest of the world began in the 1930s. George Gershwin's 1935 opera *Porgy and Bess* and the 1949 book *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect,* by the African-American anthropologist and linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner, were probably part of this expansion.

The Gullah-Geechee had achieved fame as a cultural and linguistic entity of Black Southern culture. Their story has since been covered by many—though no account is perhaps as gorgeous as Julie Dash's, in her 1991 movie *Daughters of the Dust,* or as emotional as Pat Conroy's, in his memoir about teaching Gullah-Geechee schoolchildren in the 1960s, *The Water Is Wide.* (Coincidentally, Sallie Ann was a student of Conroy's in Daufuskie's two-room schoolhouse.)

We drove on to Savannah, and made straight for Mashama Bailey's restaurant, the Grey. It's Bailey's experiment with the Southern culinary experience, combining French techniques with African-American culinary finesse and perfect local ingredients, in what was once a segregated Greyhound bus station. (Bailey is one of the few Black winners of the James Beard Award.) Recently, in response to the pandemic, the chef set up an outdoor "yurt village," with 13 tented dining huts for socially distant meals. Elsewhere in the city, I had the best caramel cake, biscuits, and confections I've eaten anywhere in the South at Back in the Day Bakery, run by master pastry chefs Cheryl and Griffith Day. And Sunday brunch at Vic's on the River is where much of Savannah's best coastal soul food is served: crab soup, fried chicken, and made-to-order omelettes with Georgia blue crab alongside unforgettable macaroni and cheese.

North Charleston (less tony than its neighbor Charleston), meanwhile, has become a hub of Gullah-Geechee establishments. One of my favorites was Nana's Seafood & Soul, where you can get fried chicken, fried fish, and Gullah-style pot roast (there really is such a thing) with three options—red rice, Sea Island peas, or greens—or the famous garlic crab with shrimp, corn on the cob, and mussels.

Nigel's Good Food, run by chefs Nigel and Louise Drayton, serves stewed turkey wings that make you want all the rice and gravy in South Carolina. You'll also want to try the Geechee wings (spicy and saucy), fried green tomatoes, and salmon and grits. The next stop was My Three Sons, a place for which there is truly no substitute, with some of the best red rice that any restaurant in the area has to offer, as well as smothered pork chops that give you immediate Southern Sunday dinner nostalgia. And Shrimp & Grits, run by chef Carlos Brown in Citadel Mall, features braised short ribs with velvety grits, collard-green spring rolls, and purple-kale Caesar salad.

Lest you think it's all rich, saucy decadence, though, I should mention the Lowcountry's superb fresh produce, which sits at the center of the traditional cuisine. The farmers' markets are reason enough to rent a place with a full kitchen, as we did, and cook the superb collards, kale, and okra. We also picked up jams and preserves like peach salsa at Barefoot Farm, in Beaufort, and bought shrimp and fish at Bradley Seafood Market, in St. Helena.

Before heading back north, we stopped at the Joseph Fields Farm on Johns Island for one of BJ's pop-up lunches. In a pit surrounded by trees heavy with pecans, a goat carcass was roasting, covered by banana leaves. In pots on the ground simmered red rice, okra soup, and a coconut-water stew made with the heads of just-caught tilefish on the surface of which bobbed bright-red Scotch bonnets. Picnic tables had been set up across a field with social distancing in mind.

The ash-baked sweet potato I held in my hand was so good that I was okay with burning my fingers. The goat had absorbed the smoke of the pecan and oak woods that fired the pit, as well as the secret sauce BJ had slathered it with. The red rice was plump and just slightly toothy, cooked in the Gullah-Geechee way, passed down from West Africa—with each grain separate and distinct.

BJ seemed satisfied with his work. "That's what makes us special—nobody can do this like us," he said. "You have to be on the land and in the water to know why it's special, and you can only do that here." Three young men were cooking the food, doing their part to keep the culture alive. They shared with BJ, and everyone else there, a dedication to bringing people together with plates passed down from the past. My past, my people, and the plates that have sustained us for centuries. ✚

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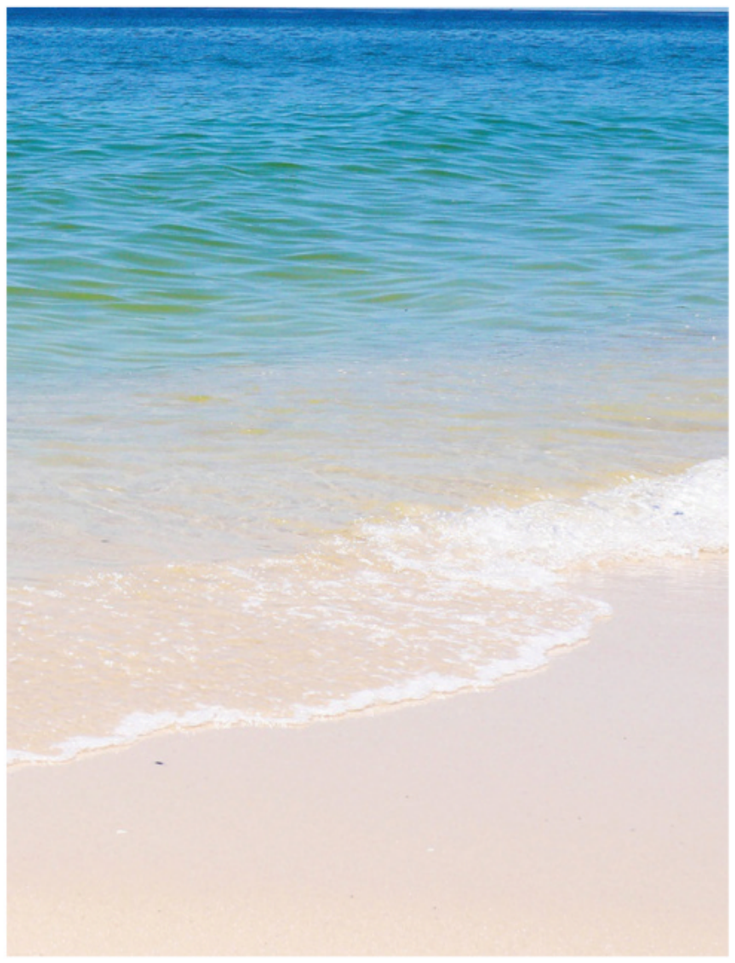
YOUR BEST SHOT

"I KNEW STOCKHOLM WOULD BE COLD IN JANUARY, but I didn't expect it to be five below freezing every single day of our trip. My girlfriend and I could only be outside for about an hour at a time before needing to warm up in a café. One afternoon, while exploring the Gamla Stan neighborhood, we spotted a trail up a hill next to Riddarfjärden bay, which had frozen over and was being used as a skating rink. After another quick coffee, we set off, our fingers and toes slowly losing sensation as the minutes passed. But when we arrived at the top, all I could focus on was the spectacular view of the city, its rooftops silhouetted against a pink sky with a full moon and a view of the skaters down below. I quickly set up my tripod and took this photo—then we rushed down the hill for yet another cozy *fika* break."

— READER KYLE MCGAHEY ON HIS PHOTOGRAPH, TAKEN WITH A FUJIFILM X-T2, JANUARY 2019

Kyle McGahey was an entrant in our ongoing Photo of the Day contest. Submit your best shots at travelandleisure.com/photos/photo-of-the-day for the chance to be featured on this page in a future issue.



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